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Learning from Premodern Commentary on 1
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Abstract

“God Our Teacher and the Teaching of Theology:
Learning from Premodern Commentary on 1 Corinthians 1-4.”

Steven Edward Harris

The doctrine of divine pedagogy, regarding how God teaches humanity about himself, has suffered neglect in modern theology. Particularly in Protestant theology, its social form, in which certain human beings are used by God to teach others, was foreshortened. Thus, its traditional explanatory function in relation to how one comes to know God through the teaching and learning of theology faded. Recently, some attempts have been made to recover the doctrine in this relation and in its full scope, notably by John Webster. This thesis adds to efforts to reassemble the doctrine by identifying a remaining gap in recent explications, namely, human teachers of theology as agents of God’s teaching, and sets out to give a theological account of their role. In this way it seeks to restore a social view of the economy of the divine pedagogy.

To do this, it turns to 1 Corinthians 1-4, and premodern commentary thereupon. It finds there is an ‘economic’ pattern to Paul’s understanding of how God brings people to know him in these chapters, as read by premodern commentators, and develops an analytic schema of five elements by which to diagnose the fullness or the paucity of a doctrine of divine pedagogy. These are: (i) God, the divine teacher; (ii) the history of this teaching; (iii) wisdom as the object taught; (iv) human students and, finally, (v) human teachers. Structuring premodern comments on 1 Corinthians 1-4 around these five elements, it draws out an expansive account of the economy of divine teaching. In concluding, it suggests some areas for further exploration and discusses the significance of the ‘economic’ form of the doctrine for contemporary theology and theological self-understanding.

God Our Teacher and the Teaching of Theology:
Learning from Premodern Commentary on 1 Corinthians 1-4

Steven Edward Harris

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Christian Theology
at the
University of Durham
Department of Theology and Religion

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Make me to know your ways, O Lord;
teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all the day long.

— Psalm 25:4-5 (ESV)

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Abbreviations

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| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| | Aquinas, Thomas |
| <i>In I ad Cor.</i> , etc. | <i>Super primam epistolam ad Corinthios lectura</i> , etc. |
| Leon. | <i>Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita</i> , 50 vols. |
| Parma | <i>S. Thomae opera omnia</i> , 25 vols. |
| ScG | <i>Summa contra Gentiles</i> (Leon. 13-15) |
| ST | <i>Summa theologiae</i> (Leon. 4-12) |
| | Augustine |
| <i>ciu.</i> | <i>De ciuitate Dei</i> (CCSL47-48) |
| <i>doctr. chr.</i> | <i>De doctrina christiana</i> (CCSL32) |
| <i>ench.</i> | <i>Enchiridion de fide spe et caritate</i> (CCSL46) |
| <i>en. Ps.</i> | <i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i> (CCSL38-40) |
| <i>ep.</i> | <i>Epistulae</i> (CSEL34, 44, 57) |
| <i>ep. lo. tr.</i> | <i>In epistolam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus</i> (CCSL37) |
| <i>f. et op.</i> | <i>De fide et operibus</i> (CSEL41) |
| <i>lo. ev. tr.</i> | <i>In Iohannis evangelium tractatus</i> (CCSL36) |
| <i>trin.</i> | <i>De trinitate</i> (CCSL50-50A) |
| | Bugenhagen, Johann |
| <i>Comm.</i> | <i>Commentarius in quatuor capita prioris epistolae ad Corinthios</i> |
| | Bullinger, Heinrich |
| <i>In prior. ad Cor.</i> | <i>In priorem D. Pauli ad Corinthios epistolam</i> |
| | Cajetan, Tommaso de Vio Cardinal |
| <i>Ep. Pauli</i> | <i>Epistolae Pauli et aliorum apostolorum ad Graecam veritatem castigatae</i> |
| | Calvin, John |
| <i>CNTC</i> | <i>Calvin's New Testament Commentaries</i> . 12 vols. |
| <i>CO</i> | <i>Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia</i> , 59 vols. |
| <i>CTS</i> | <i>Calvin's Commentaries</i> . 45 vols. Calvin Translation Society. |
| <i>Inst.</i> | <i>Institutio religionis christianae / Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> |
| McNeill-Battles | Battles, trans. <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> . 2 vols. Ed., McNeill. |
| | Catharinus, Ambrosius |
| <i>Comm.</i> | <i>Commentaria in omnes Divi Pauli et alias septem canonicas epistolas</i> |
| | Chrysostom, John |
| <i>Hom.</i> | <i>In epistolam I ad Corinthios homiliae</i> |
| | Colet, John |
| <i>En. prim. ad Cor.</i> | <i>Enarratio in Primam epistolam S. Pauli ad Corinthios</i> |
| <i>CCCM</i> | <i>Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis</i> |
| <i>CCSL</i> | <i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i> |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| CSEL | <i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> |
| | de Gagny, Jean |
| Schol. | <i>Breuissima et facillima in omnes D. Pauli epistolas scholia</i> |
| | Denis the Carthusian |
| Comm. | <i>In omnes beati Pauli epistolas commentaria</i> |
| | Ephrem the Syrian |
| Comm. | <i>Commentarii in epistolas D. Pauli nunc primum ex Armenio in Latinum</i> |
| | Erasmus, Desiderius |
| Paraphr. | <i>Paraphrases in epistolam Pavli ad Corinthios priorem</i> |
| | Glossa ordinaria |
| | <i>Biblitorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria</i> , vol. 6 |
| Gloss | marginal gloss |
| interlinear | interlinear gloss |
| | Gregory the Great |
| Conc. | <i>Concordia quorundam testimoniorum S. Scripturae</i> (PL79) |
| Dial. | <i>Dialogorum libri IV</i> (SC251, 260, 265) |
| HEv. | <i>Homiliae in Evangelia</i> (PL76) |
| HEz. | <i>Homiliae in Hiezechielem</i> (CCSL142) |
| Mor. | <i>Moralia in Iob</i> (CCSL143, 143A, 143B) |
| | Guilliaud, Claude |
| Coll. | <i>Collatio in omnes divi Pauli apostoli Epistolas</i> |
| | Hemmingsen, Neils |
| Comm. | <i>Commentarius In Utramque Epistolam Pauli Apostoli Ad Corinthos</i> , vol. 1 |
| | Hoffmeister, Johann |
| In utr. ad Cor. Hom. | <i>In utrasque S. Pauli ad Corinthios epistolas Homilie</i> |
| | Hugh of St. Cher |
| In ep. omn. D. Pauli Rep. apostil. | <i>Opera omnia in universum vetus, & novum testamentum</i> , vol. 7 <i>Repertorium apostillarum utriusque testamenti domini Hugonis Cardinalis</i> , vol. 6 |
| ad. litt. | ad litteram |
| exp. gloss. | expositio glossae |
| moral. | moraliter |
| | Lefèvre d'Étaples, Jacques |
| S. Pauli Ep. | <i>S. Pauli epistolae XIV</i> |
| | Maier, Georg |
| En. prim. ad Cor. | <i>Enarratio primae epistolae Pauli ad Corinthios</i> |
| | Melanchthon, Philipp |
| Annot. | <i>Annotationes ad Corinthios duas</i> |

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| <i>Comm.</i> | Meyer, Sebastian <i>In utramque D. Pauli epistolam ad Corinthios commentarii</i> |
| <i>Comm.</i> | Musculus, Wolfgang <i>In ambas apostoli Pauli ad Corinthios epistolas commentarii</i> |
| <i>Comm. Porr.</i> | Nicholas of Amiens <i>Commentarius Porretanus in primam epistolam ad Corinthios</i> |
| <i>Postil.</i> | Nicolas of Gorran <i>Postilla elucidativa et magistralis super epistolas Pauli</i> |
| | Nicholas of Lyra <i>Biblorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria</i> , vol. 6 |
| <i>Postil.</i> | Olivi, Peter of John <i>Postilla in Isaiam et in I ad Corinthios</i> |
| <i>fr.</i> | Origen Jenkins, “Origen on I Corinthians” = <i>fr.</i> 1-16; Jenkins, “Origen on I Corinthians II” = <i>fr.</i> 17-32 |
| <i>PG</i> | <i>Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Graeca</i> |
| <i>PL</i> | <i>Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latina</i> |
| <i>Comm.</i> | Pellikan, Konrad <i>Commentaria biblorum</i> , vol. 7 |
| <i>Lit. exp. ep. Pauli</i> | Primaticci, Gregorio <i>Literalis expositio omnium epistolarum divi Pauli</i> |
| <i>Qu. ep. Pauli</i> | Robert of Melun <i>Quaestiones de epistolis Pauli</i> |
| <i>In prior. ad Cor.</i> | Vermigli, Peter Martyr <i>In selectissimam D. Pauli priorem ad Corinthios Epistolam</i> |
| <i>Ep. aliq. Pauli</i> | Zwingli, Ulrich <i>In Evangelicum historiam de domino nostro Iesu Christo Epistolasque aliquot Pauli</i> |

Declaration

This work has been submitted to the University of Durham in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is my own work, and none of it has been previously submitted to the University of Durham or any other university.

Statement of Copyright

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published in any format, including electronic, without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

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Finally, I have known no greater privilege and blessing than sharing the journey of knowing and loving God with Valerie. It was a sacrifice for her to see me travel an ocean

to study in Durham for some seven months and, not without trial, she has been ever supportive of God's calling on my life. I am so thankful that for the past two short months now I have been able to call her my wife.

Introduction | Theologians in God's Plan

"For if someone experiences love towards the Word,
and if he enjoys hearing, speaking, thinking, lecturing, and writing about Christ,
he should know that this is ... a gift of the Holy Spirit."

— Martin Luther¹

God teaches us about himself through other people. This simple truth is a commonplace in Christian experience: pastors, counselors and spiritual directors regularly contribute to one's understanding of God and his ways. Yet this truth deserves closer theological development, as well as particular attention to those people with professional obligations to knowing and teaching others about God, namely, theologians. God, I shall argue, uses professors of theology (and others who provide instruction in the knowledge of God) to teach others about himself. God makes use of theologians not in an occasional fashion, assisting them only in the moment of teaching, but in a much more basic and thoroughgoing way. God, so to speak, 'makes' theologians: certain people are caused to take up a form of life and activity appropriate to the teaching of theology.² They become, through God's working, mediate causes in God's own teaching for which, as we shall see, God has an orderly plan—an 'economy', from the Greek οἰκονομία—according to which he calls, gifts and empowers certain people to teach others in line with definite methods, structure and purposes.

In 1 Corinthians 1-4, the apostle Paul describes this economy with some density. These chapters detail how it is that God teaches spiritual knowledge by means of the apostles he calls for this purpose. Paul explains to the Corinthians how he himself has been caught up in God's plan to bring them to know God: he was "called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God" (1:1) and was sent by Christ to preach the gospel (1:17). The apostle describes himself and others in the same position as "stewards (οἰκονόμοι) of the mysteries of God" (4:1), and later in the letter relates that he has been "entrusted with an οἰκονομία" (9:17). In this economy, Paul preaches the mystery of the gospel of Christ, the wisdom of God, by which the Corinthians have come to know God.³

¹ LW26: 376.

² I owe the language of God 'making' theologians to Mark A. McIntosh, *Divine Teaching: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Malden, MA/Oxford: Blackwell, 2008).

³ On οἰκονομία in the New Testament, see Wilfred Tooley, "Stewards of God: An Examination of the Terms ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΟΣ and ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ in the New Testament," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 19/1 (Mar. 1966): 74-86; John Reumann, "ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ – Terms in Paul in Comparison with Lucan *Heilsgeschichte*," *New*

Those who authored commentaries on 1 Corinthians 1-4⁴ from the patristic period through the Reformation saw in these words of Paul a description of—and prescription for—the teachers of the knowledge of God in their own days, whether these were pastors, catechists, bishops or professors.⁵ They perceived that the Church stands under the same divine activity as in Paul's day because God continues to operate the economy of his teaching in a fundamentally similar manner. As God gave Paul and other apostles to

Testament Studies 13/2 (Jan. 1967): 147-167. Both speak of the development from an earlier sense of οἰκονομία referring to Paul's own stewardship in, e.g., 1 Cor. 4:1-2 and 9:17, to a later sense referring to God's overarching governance of the world and its salvation in, e.g., Eph. 1:10. Premodern commentators on 1 Cor. 1-4 understood the later, broader sense of οἰκονομία to be present in meaning in 1 Cor. 1:21 and elsewhere, if not the word itself. See also Gerhard Richter, *Oikonomia. Der Gebrauch des Wortes Oikonomia im Neuen Testament, bei den Kirchenvätern und in der theologischen Literatur bis ins 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012).

⁴ Premodern commentators universally considered these four chapters a unit, though in varying ways (to the extent that when Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 5v, speaks of the first five chapters as a unit, I am convinced he misspeaks; his description, anyway, fits the first four). I give a few examples of how commentators viewed these as a unit. Ambrosiaster argues there are "many causes" for Paul's writing of the letter, the tenth taking him to chapter 7; the first three correspond neatly to chapters 1-4 (*argumentum*, CSEL81/2: 3-4). Aquinas divides the letter in terms of which sacrament is being treated: chapters 1-4 deal with baptism, and the teaching which accompanies it (*In I ad Cor.* 1.2.19-20). Bugenhagen, in the Reformation, authors a commentary (unusually) on only 1 Corinthians 1-4, the first of the letter's "two parts", in which Paul "lays Christ as a foundation" before turning to other matters (*Comm.*, fol. [6]r).

⁵ There is little secondary literature on this commentary tradition, including only one unpublished monograph-length treatment, dealing with only two figures in the history: Marie Hendrickx, *Sagesse de Dieu et sagesse des hommes. Le commentaire de saint Thomas d'Aquin sur 1 Co 1-4 et sa confrontation avec la Grande Glose de Pierre Lombard*, ThD dissertation (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1987). There are some relevant articles and chapters: Marie Hendrickx, "Sagesse de la parole (1 Co 1, 17) selon saint Thomas d'Aquin. Le commentaire de Saint Thomas et la 'Grande Glose' de Pierre Lombard," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 110/3 (1988): 336-50; Christopher Wells, *Sacraments of the Incarnate Word: The Christological Form of the Summa Theologiae*, PhD dissertation (Notre Dame, 2009), ch. 2; R. Ward Holder, *John Calvin and the Grounding of Interpretation: Calvin's First Commentaries* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp.58-68; Jon Balserak, "1 Corinthians Commentary: Exegetical Tradition," in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, eds. Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi and Frank A. James III (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp.283-304, esp. pp.295-302. See also Daniel A. Keating, "Aquinas on 1 and 2 Corinthians: The Sacraments and their Ministers," in *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to His Biblical Commentaries*, eds. Thomas Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating and John P. Yocum (London: T&T Clark, 2005), pp. 127-48; John L. Thompson, "John Calvin on Biblical Interpretation: Tradition and Innovation in Early Reformed Exegesis of 1 Corinthians," (lecture, Korean Institute for Reformed Studies at Kosin University, Busan, South Korea, October 31, 2007). Douglas H. Shantz, "Vermigli on Tradition and the Fathers: Patristic Perspectives from his Commentary on 1 Corinthians," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda*, ed. Frank A. James III (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp.115-38 unfortunately only treats the preface. Two recent commentaries are particularly attentive to historical-exegetical matters: Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Wolfgang Schrage, *Die erste Brief an die Korinther*, vol. 1, *1 Kor 1,1-6,11*, EKK (Zürich/Braunschweig: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991). The following deal with exegesis of 1 Corinthians 1-4 mainly outside of commentaries (see n. 6 below): Anthony C. Thiselton, "Reception History or Wirkungsgeschichte? 'The Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians: Exegesis and Reception-History in the Patristic Era' (2004)," in *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: Collected Works and New Essays* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), pp.287-304; M. G. A. Haykin, "'The Spirit of God': The Exegesis of 1 Cor. 2:10-12 by Origen and Athanasius," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 35/6 (1982): 513-28; idem, "'A Sense of Awe in the Presence of the Ineffable': 1 Cor. 2.11-12 in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 41/3 (Aug. 1988): 341-57.

the early Church to instruct his people in saving wisdom, he gives teachers of theology today, whether they are titled masters of the sacred page in thirteenth-century Paris or professors of Scripture in sixteenth-century Geneva. St. Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274) and John Calvin (1509-1564), who held these titles respectively, will form continual touching points for our investigation, both for their exemplary exegetical practice and their theological insight into the divine pedagogy.⁶

By making constructive use of these commentaries on 1 Cor. 1-4, this thesis develops its own systematic account of how God uses theologians (and teachers of theology more broadly, including, e.g., pastors, catechists and religious education teachers) to bring his people to know him. I proceed largely by historical survey of comments on particular verses systematically arranged, occasionally making judgments between rivaling interpretations, but for the most part drawing out the wealth of exegeses of 1 Corinthians in order to lay out as extensive a view of the divine pedagogy as possible. The historical surveys are organized more or less chronologically, with attention to linguistic (Latin or Greek), ecclesial and historical differences (patristic, medieval or Reformation; Catholic, Lutheran or Reformed); nevertheless, I am principally concerned with the constructive theology of God's teaching that emerges as we progress. As a result, I sometimes follow comments with theological implications or developments that are not present in the commentaries themselves. Additionally, where it seems to me there are topics untreated in the commentaries that are necessary for a fully economic doctrine of divine teaching, I have offered what I intend to be traditional and ecumenical theological reflections (as, especially, in the first chapter).⁷

⁶ To examine everything written on 1 Cor. 1-4 would be too large a task. I have restricted myself, first, to *commentaries* in distinction to exegesis in works of other genres, except where these are picked up by later commentators, as happens frequently with, e.g., Augustine and Gregory; second, to *published* commentaries, excluding a great number of medieval works laying still in manuscripts; and third, to commentaries written *up until 1564*, the year of Calvin's death, thus providing a good, but not overwhelmingly large, sample of Reformation-era commentary. As a result, the thesis is textually sourced centrally from the high middle ages (12th-13th centuries) and the Reformation (16th century), when exegetical revivals led to an increased production in commentary on 1 Corinthians; our guideposts in these periods are, as mentioned, Aquinas and Calvin. It is worth noting at this point that Calvin also preached sermons on 1 Corinthians; these remain unpublished (Bibliothèque de Genève ms. fr. 26), but are under preparation by Elsie Anne McKee for the *Supplementa Calviniana* series.

⁷ A thesis focused on another part of Scripture, such as John 14-16 or Ephesians 4, would likewise fill in these gaps. First Corinthians 1-4 has been chosen because it provides the broadest 'economic' account of the divine pedagogy and the role theologians play therein.

In sharing with his premodern commentators the understanding that Paul's description of his apostolic teaching has much to say to contemporary teaching of the knowledge of God, I seek to draw from this biblical passage and the breadth of premodern commentary on it an expansive account of how it is that God teaches us about himself through theologians. To be thus 'expansive', of course, one must treat the full range of realities within God's economy of teaching. Though the position and authority, the method and judgment of God's teachers forms the heart of my systematic exposition, it is surrounded and conditioned by other important elements. These include other human agents, objects, histories and, of course, God himself.

The Structure of the Economy of Divine Teaching

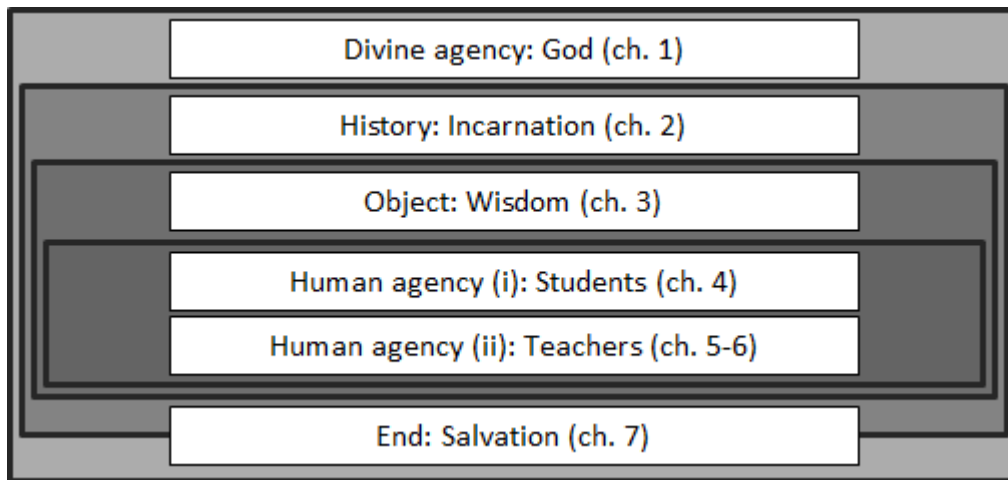
Five elements in God's economy of teaching can be drawn from Paul, and the commentators who reflected on his words in 1 Cor. 1-4. These are: (i) God, the divine teacher who structures and governs his pedagogy; (ii) the history of salvation, the process of God's teaching of humanity;⁸ (iii) wisdom, the object taught in this pedagogy; (iv) human students, those creatures who are recipients of God's instruction; and (v) human teachers, agents of God's teaching. Taken together, these five pieces comprise the full economic picture of God's teaching that is present in the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians as well as patristic, medieval and Reformation-era commentary thereupon. God ordinarily teaches his people, the Church, by bringing into being a certain kind of human agency, teachers of theology, and enabling them to teach another set of human agents, students of theology. This pedagogical process, moreover, has a divinely-intended object, namely, the wisdom of God found in Scripture, which is Christ himself. Finally, this economy of teaching takes different forms in different periods of the history of salvation, i.e., with Israel, in the incarnation, in the Church and in the eschaton.

These five elements taken together make up an 'economy' of God's saving teaching. Though in each there is something central in our consideration, the larger, integral reality should not be lost from view. For example, while the central history, for

⁸ John Reumann argues that the early Christian usage of οἰκονομία is equivalent with *Heilsgeschichte* in contemporary theology: "OIKONOMIA = 'Covenant'; Terms for *Heilsgeschichte* in Early Christian Usage." *Novum Testamentum* 3/4 (Dec. 1959): 282-292, at p.283, citing Cullmann and Harnack inter alia. I have preferred to use 'economy' throughout in an attempt to highlight the synchronic, structural elements that persist through historical dispensations, and especially God's transcendence of this history—even as he freely becomes immanent in the history of salvation in the incarnation.

Paul and his commentators, is that of Israel, Christ and the Church, this interacts in complex ways with other histories. Again, the central object of the economy is the wisdom who is Christ, witnessed in Scripture, but this object is related in various ways to others, such as commentaries, treatises, homilies and letters. Thus, in God's economy there are multiple agents are at work on various objects constellated around the central object through many histories which take their meaning from the central history of God's saving works. Teachers instruct students and work together with other teachers; students learn from human teachers in harmony with other students. Teachers and students gather around the Bible and commentaries of different kinds upon it. This takes place, for example, in monasteries, in lecture halls and in churches. In all of this, God is active in calling, gifting, empowering, enlightening and so on—beyond God's more fundamental gifts of life, breath, will, etc.

This broad economy of the divine teaching is dependent on God for its arrangement, its progress and the achievement of its true end. Accordingly, before coming to speak of theologians, one must first speak of God our teacher. Thus, a treatment of God himself, particularly as Father, Son and Spirit, forms the first chapter. In God's saving acts, he also acts as the divine teacher he is; the second chapter, then, will examine how God's central saving act, the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, is an act of God the teacher and changes decisively how the economy of divine teaching operates. This history, further, reveals fully the object God has been trying to teach his people Israel: the wisdom they sought in the Law is made clear in Jesus Christ. This wisdom, then, is the subject of the third chapter. Because this wisdom is a spiritual knowledge, only a certain kind of person is able to learn it, namely, the "spiritual person" (1 Cor. 2:15). The fourth chapter accordingly defines what kind of person will be capable of learning the wisdom of God. All teachers are first students, and so the fifth and sixth chapters build on the fourth to specify further how God takes some students of theology to 'make' them theologians and how these teachers act and will be judged in light of that divine making. Finally, God's purpose in his economy of teaching is to bring a people to know him, which is, according to a favourite verse of Aquinas and Calvin, eternal life itself (Jn. 17:3). The study, thus, appropriately concludes with a treatment of salvation.



This retention and development of Paul's understanding of God's economy of teaching meant that premodern commentators preserved a social view of how it is that God ordinarily teaches us. Holding the fourth and fifth elements together (i.e., students and teachers) maintained the biblical understanding of God's teaching activity, whereby God chooses certain human beings for a particular role (the Levitical priesthood or the ecclesial teaching office) and uses them in this role to teach his people (Israel or the Church). This is a decidedly *social* understanding of God's teaching in which this pedagogy takes place by certain people teaching others. But it is also a certain kind of *theological* understanding; it makes claims about how it is that God teaches others through these certain people. God, the premoderns argue, is quite active in the teaching of theology; he not only commissions theologians, but also empowers them in the act of teaching. It is in these two directions, I want to briefly suggest, that the premodern reading(s) of 1 Corinthians 1-4 can contribute to contemporary discussions of divine pedagogy.

Recovering the Economy of Divine Teaching

These two directions can be seen to complement two contemporary attempts to recover an 'economic' understanding of God's teaching. Among the many valuable and interesting claims of the premoderns, these fundamental theological perspectives are, I would argue, the most important for us to recover. They help by taking forward contemporary efforts to understand the Church's practice of theology in light of God's 'economy', or the history of salvation. In the first, Protestant contribution I bring forward, it is the *social* aspect

which asks further development, while in the second, Catholic example, it is the *theological* element, I suggest, which one may wish to supplement.

One contemporary Protestant theologian who has done much to recover an understanding of the divine teaching, and its consequences for theologians, is John Webster.⁹ In his efforts to perceive how the practice of the theologian is encompassed by God's teaching, he moves from an initially bare account of divine agency to an increasingly 'economic' presentation of the form this action takes. Theology occurs within the 'economy of the Spirit,' Webster will say at last, as theological intelligence is surrounded by 'divine instruction.' Nevertheless, there remains space within the account he has developed for considering a second kind of human agency, that is, human teaching, and its relation to the work of God the teacher as a mediate cause in the economy of divine teaching. This would provide a more fully *social* account of how the divine pedagogy operates among human creatures.

In his inaugural lecture at Oxford, from 1998, Webster suggests a fairly simple understanding of God's relation to theological practice. "The distinctiveness of Christian theology", he states, "lies ... in its invocation of God as agent in the intellectual practice of theology. In order to give account of its own operations, that is, Christian theology will talk of God and God's actions. Talk of God not only describes the matter into which theology enquires, but also, crucially, informs its portrayal of its own processes of enquiry".¹⁰ Thus, the individual, as he or she sets out to speak of God, is also accompanied and aided by God, whose active presence has an effect on the intellectual 'operations' of the theologian. Webster has here initiated a crucial recovery of the first element, God the teacher, from which all the others take shape; yet so far the account

⁹ Lydia Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Malden, MA/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) offers another example of a contemporary recovery of many aspects of the doctrine of divine pedagogy, but again, without placing illumination in its fullest economic frame; in particular, it treats how illumination operates in human learning but not teaching. See also, on divine pedagogy in 1 Cor. 1-4, Mark McIntosh, "Faith, Reason and the Mind of Christ," in *Reason and the Reasons of Faith*, eds. Paul J. Griffiths and Reinhard Hütter (London/NY: T&T Clark, 2005), pp.119-42, and the works cited in p.124 n. 11; David S. Yeago, "The Spirit, the Church and the Scriptures: Biblical Inspiration and Interpretation Revisited," in *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church*, eds. James J. Buckley and David S. Yeago (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), pp.49-93 (pp.60-65 on 1 Cor. 2:6-16 and pp.85-92 on 1 Cor. 4:1-2; p.88 on the continuity of the Spirit's economy); and most recently, Martin Westerholm, "On Christian Discernment and the Problem of the Theological," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16/4 (Oct. 2014): 454-69, esp. pp.461-63.

¹⁰ John Webster, *Theological Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p.18.

has little economic scope. In view are God our teacher and the individual theologian in the act of theological investigation.

Recently, Webster's portrayals of theological practice have displayed more descriptive density. In his 2011 essay "Illumination," Webster develops his most extensive economic reflections on the divine pedagogy.¹¹ "The setting", he begins, "of an account of illumination is a theological meditation on the economy of the Spirit".¹² The illumination of the believing mind as it contemplates Scripture—the activity with which Webster is here concerned—receives its determinations, thus, from all the works and ways of God's Spirit, but particularly those by which he forms spiritual people in the Church. The illuminated reading of Scripture thus takes place within "a spiritual and ecclesial culture of interpretation by which the regenerate mind is formed, checked and directed".¹³ "There is inspired Scripture, and there is a set of Spirit-moved persons and activities (to avoid hermeneutical inflation, call them 'readers' and 'reading'), which constitute creaturely intelligence learning the divine mind".¹⁴ One finds, thus, three of the five elements which make up a fully economic account of the divine pedagogy: we have (i) divine agency, in the illuminating Spirit; (iii) an object, the inspired text of Scripture; and (iv) human agency, 'Spirit-moved persons and activities'.

Webster also mentions a 'spiritual and ecclesial culture,' and cultures are necessarily historical. This second element, (ii) history, is briefly made explicit in this essay: the 'economy of the Spirit' has a bearing, he writes, on the "divine interposition" by which the Trinity redeems the human race, that is, the incarnation. Christ is "conceived", "sanctified", "endowed" and "empowered" by the Spirit in his earthly mission; moreover, in the establishment of the Church which follows, the Spirit acts to restore human persons, effecting their "fellowship with God" in "a living, practical and intelligent history". Theology is a human activity which occurs within the compass of God's reconciling work begun in the incarnation and "filled out" in the life of the Church;¹⁵ it is undertaken at a certain point in history (i.e., after Pentecost) and takes historical form in individuals as well as the community of the Church. As Webster writes

¹¹ John Webster, "Illumination," in *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), pp.50-64.

¹² Ibid., p.53.

¹³ Ibid., p.63.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.60. Interestingly, for our purposes, Webster immediately proceeds to exegete 1 Cor. 2:6-16.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.56.

elsewhere, “Theology takes place in a sphere in which God the teacher is lovingly present to reconciled creatures, summoning the intellect to attentiveness and learning. Theology is created intellectual love answering divine instruction. Divine instruction initiates, surrounds and encloses theological intelligence; theological studiousness is the mind’s movement within the larger reconciling movement.”¹⁶ One is now far past a limited understanding of God’s teaching; in its place, God the teacher takes up his human students within the whole “sphere of the outworking of salvation in the gospel, the Church, baptism, the sanctification of human beings and the invocation of God”.¹⁷

There is nevertheless an aspect of this ‘sphere’ which remains untreated, namely, the fifth element which makes God’s economy of teaching a social one: Christ’s giving of teachers to the Church, those specially called, gifted and commissioned human beings through whose activity of human teaching God acts to instruct his people. Webster offers a developed theology of one form of human agency, (iv) the student, the person engaged in the effort of coming-to-know God as he or she is illumined by God’s Spirit; he does not yet, however, elaborate a theology of a second kind of human agency, (v) the teacher, the human person assigned the role of sharing the wisdom of God with those coming to know him. This is the major lacuna in contemporary Protestant theology available to be filled by a consideration of premodern commentary on 1 Corinthians 1-4; hence the space assigned to the fifth element in the lengthy chapters five and six.

A second aspect that could use refining is the role of God’s teaching in post-conciliar Catholic theology, as represented by the collaborative dogmatics *Mysterium Salutis*, meant as a ‘salvation-historical’ (or ‘economic’) re-presentation of Catholic doctrine as a whole.¹⁸ The Catholic picture of instruction in the knowledge of God is thoroughly social and institutional; there stand, beside theologians, also the Pope and the college of bishops, forming a defined ‘teaching office.’ The laity, according to Feiner in *Mysterium Salutis*, also have a role to play in teaching others about God.¹⁹ It is God’s

¹⁶ John Webster, “Curiosity,” in *The Domain of the Word*, pp.193-202 at p.198.

¹⁷ John Webster, “Sub ratione Dei. Zum Verhältnis von Theologie und Universität,” *Communio: Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift* 42/2 (Mar.-Apr. 2013): 151-69, at p.155.

¹⁸ Johannes Feiner and Magnus Löhrer, eds., *Mysterium Salutis: Grundriß heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik*, 5 vols. (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1965-76). The first volume, from which I draw, was completed while the Council was still underway. See also Magnus Löhrer, Christian Schütz and Dieter Wiederkehr, eds., *Mysterium Salutis, Ergänzungsband: Arbeitshilfen und Weiterführungen* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1981).

¹⁹ Johannes Feiner, “Offenbarung und Kirche—Kirche und Offenbarung,” in *Mysterium Salutis*, 1: 535.

activity in this picture which is more confined than perhaps it should be. Often the Spirit's leading of the teaching office is described simply as preservation from error, rather than anything of positive form or content. Moreover, there is no clear account of how God calls and forms people to take up their role within the divinely-ordained and structured teaching office in the post-apostolic Church.

God's revelation, according to *Mysterium Salutis*, is mediated by its re-presentation (*Vergegenwärtigung*) today through the Church. All the members of the Church, by means of the faith through which the Spirit opens up revelation to their understanding, come to know and, in turn, communicate this revelation onward. "In this respect, theology has, from its root, a pneumatic character".²⁰ This, however, is in a special way the task of the Pope and bishops, who form the Church's teaching office, and theologians, who by their investigations subserve the teaching office's functions. Beyond the provision of the light of faith, the Spirit's assistance of the Church's teachers is most usually expressed in terms of "preservation from error", an *assistentia negativa*.²¹ This is also the case with the infallibility of an ecumenical council, to which the Spirit's assistance is "connected", and papal infallibility, which "stands under an especial promise of Christ".²² The Spirit leads into all truth (cf. Jn. 14:26, 16:13) simply, on this understanding, by preventing a fall into error. Löhner's claim that the Spirit ensures conversation among council delegates "does not miss the truth" could be filled out positively by his reference to Congar's conception of the Spirit's "covenant presence" actively bringing about consensus leading to conciliar decisions.²³

This Catholic conception certainly possesses a detailed and thoughtful account of the fifth element, human teachers of theology, in God's economy. But it seems to lack some of the depth that might be desired from the first element, God himself as he is active in the teaching of theology by his sovereign Spirit. Teachers of theology, according to the premoderns, do mediate the divine wisdom, but only as they are formed by the Spirit into fitting *media* of God's teaching activity. While, then, the function of (v) human teachers is especially developed in *Mysterium Salutis*, there are perhaps ways in which (i)

²⁰ Johannes Feiner and Magnus Löhner, "Einleitung," in *Mysterium Salutis*, 1: XXXV; cf. Feiner, "Offenbarung und Kirche," p.526.

²¹ Magnus Löhner, "Träger der Vermittlung," in *Mysterium Salutis*, 1: 571-2, 582; Karl Rahner und Karl Lehmann, "Geschichtlichkeit der Vermittlung," in *Mysterium Salutis*, 1: 766, 769.

²² Löhner, "Träger der Vermittlung," pp.577, 580.

²³ Ibid., pp.579-80.

God's agency as a present, sovereign and active teacher could be filled out. The *social* shape of God's economy of teaching is the major lacuna this thesis hopes to fill, and which such a postconciliar Catholic theology provides (in a way that is helpful, though not unproblematic ecumenically); conversely, critical theological attention should continue to be given to its character as the economy of *God's* teaching, with the fullest sense of ways in which he calls, commissions, gifts, forms, empowers, leads and so on. Direction from the history of commentary on 1 Corinthians 1-4 in this regard is found especially in chapters one and six.

Conclusion

According to John Webster, "What is required" in contemporary theological self-understanding is "an expansive account of the economy by which [the theological mind] is formed and within which it fulfils its calling".²⁴ As I go on to treat how it is that 'God teaches us about himself through other people'—and specifically, theologians—this 'expansiveness' forms an important criterion. The economy Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 1-4, of which the apostle knows himself a part, is subsequently elaborated in many ways by commentators from the Fathers through the Reformation. These elaborations are, for the most part, placed alongside one another, expansively, rather than played off against one another. I begin, as mentioned above, at the most expansive point, the point that determines everything to follow: God himself. For who God is as wise and the teacher of his wisdom is determinative for the ways human teachers of his wisdom are related to and employed in his pedagogy.

²⁴ Webster, "Curiosity," p.199.

Chapter One | **God the Teacher of His Wisdom**

“For he who was the true wisdom of the Father in the substance of divinity became wisdom for us through his humanity, since through him we have learned true wisdom, that is, the knowledge of the Trinity.”

— Atto of Vercelli

God teaches us about himself through other people. Paul, who is one of those chosen by God to teach others, begins 1 Corinthians by identifying himself as “called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (1:1). Paul is given the office and task of instructing the Church as an apostle not by his own volition but by the divine will, the θέλημα θεοῦ. He does not take it upon himself to teach the Gentiles the knowledge of God, but is given a part in an already existing plan of God our teacher, of which Paul is but a small part, to bring the world to know the wisdom found in Christ. God, in other words, directs the economy of his teaching as he wills. Our roles within this economy are dependent upon prior divine actions which express who God eternally is. Before, then, one can speak of theologians, their position and authority, their method and judgment, one must take a more ‘expansive’ view: one must begin with he who is wisdom and becomes wisdom for us, Christ, as well as he who knows this wisdom most intimately and reveals it to us as he lives within us, the Spirit. This is he who desires theologians for their task and makes them capable of taking it up. This is God our teacher.

To say that God teaches us suggests, first of all, that God is a teacher, that in and of himself he is able to teach. No creature first taught God: “For who has known the mind of the Lord? Who instructs him?” (1 Cor. 2:15). God, unlike us, is not wise by learning another’s wisdom, but rather is wise by his own wisdom; moreover, God does not become wise over time but is the eternally wise God. God is, in fact, the wisdom by which all creatures become wise. God, our teacher, is able to communicate his wisdom to us. God enables his human creatures to become wise by sharing his wisdom with them in Jesus Christ and allowing them to understand this wisdom by his Spirit. Through the sendings of the Son and the Spirit, God the Father teaches the world. Together, Father, Son and Spirit enact this teaching work by which the divine wisdom is communicated to human beings. In the lapidary phrase of Wolfgang Musculus (1497-1563), “the Father reveals, the Son reveals, and the Spirit reveals”.¹

¹ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 63.

Each person of the Trinity, in accordance with their own particular roles as sending but not sent (the Father), sending and being sent (the Son), and not sending but sent (the Spirit), reveals the wisdom of God to those he has made to find their destiny in him. Able to reveal this wisdom, each person of the Trinity knows it perfectly themselves. Since the Son is all that the Father is, except what makes him the Father, and the Spirit is all that the Father and Son are, except what makes them Father and Son, “what the Father knows, the Son knows and the Spirit knows”.² Each inseparably knows the wisdom that they are as infinitely wise and eternally wisdom itself, and inseparably they reveal this wisdom to the world in Christ, he who is wisdom in flesh. Christ is both agent and object of the economy of divine teaching, he who teaches and he whom God’s students are taught.

The Economy of Divine Teaching

During his earthly ministry, Christ called and taught his disciples, sharing with them his divine wisdom, and died to procure the salvation that is the end of all his ways and works in the world, the epitome of his wisdom. Rising again from the dead, Christ commissioned his disciples to pass on what he had taught them, now to all nations, and to baptize as many as would believe in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit he had revealed to them, for the forgiveness of their sins (Mt. 28:19-20). This commissioning of the apostles, those who had learned from him as a μαθητής, a disciple or student, and were now going out as an ἀπόστολος, a messenger or envoy, one sent, was the continuation of Christ’s pedagogy on earth by means of human teachers. In God’s economy, those who had begun as students of Christ now went to bring his teaching to all the world.

This, however, did not signal the end of a divine pedagogy and the beginning of a human one; rather, God was choosing to operate his pedagogy through human means by the power of his Spirit. This had been the case under the old covenant, with the Levitical priesthood, and now it was beginning in a new way under the new covenant enacted by the shedding of Christ’s blood. The pouring out of the Spirit signaled a new moment in the divine pedagogy, in which the teaching of Christ would be carried on in the Church by human teachers under the instruction of the Spirit. The wisdom, the power and the plan

² Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, ad. litt., fol. 77v.

upon which this economy depends remained (and remains) in God's hands. It is God who intended this grand οἰκονομία, his economy of salvation, from all eternity and who now works it out through little human minds and voices, voices such as the apostle Paul.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul greets the church in the city by introducing himself as "called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God" (1:1). Paul is acknowledging his position within God's economy, within the work of divine pedagogy. Paul is neither the author nor the lord of this ministry, but only its servant—a steward, an οἰκονόμος (4:1). The θέλημα θεοῦ, the will of God, has given him this role as a teacher and a preacher of the wisdom of God; it is not due to anything in himself that he exercises this function, or better, anything in himself that aids him in fulfilling this task is itself a gift of God, itself a part of God's all-encompassing orchestration of his plan of salvation. Further, by naming himself an apostle, one sent by Jesus Christ, Paul takes up his place at this particular moment of salvation-history, after the resurrection of Christ and his commissioning of the apostles. He knows his task to be determined by this moment and that divine action which creates it. Thus Paul has confidence to face others who would claim an authority for themselves and oppose the exercise of his God-given commission.

There were others in Corinth, other teachers who boasted of a wisdom they taught to others, but Paul could see that this was not the wisdom of God, but rather a "wisdom of the world" (1:20). Nevertheless, because of the particular eloquence, persuasiveness and insight with which these teachers shared their worldly wisdom, they attracted a great number in the church to themselves and gathered followers for their teachings. These self-chosen (in this sense αἰρετικός, heretical) followings formed into factions around different human teachers and divided the church in Corinth. The earliest extant Latin commentary writer, Ambrosiaster (*fl.* 366-84), understands the force and intent in Paul's self-introduction as an apostle.³ It sounds the first note in Paul's lengthy correction of the Corinthians for their following after human wisdom rather than the divine wisdom of the cross. "Here", Ambrosiaster writes, "the apostle sets out everything contrary to heresies, and asserts himself as a true preacher because he was sent by Christ

³ An earlier commentary on 1 Corinthians, now lost, was composed by Marius Victorinus (d. c.363). See further Stephen Andrew Cooper, trans. with introduction, *Marius Victorinus' Commentary on Galatians* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), pp.3-5.

‘by the will of God’”.⁴ According to the Greek commentator Theophylact of Ohrid (1055-1107), Paul makes sure to mention that he is an apostle ‘by the will of God’ to say that “God now wants me to be your apostle and teacher. How is it that you want other teachers? Are you now equal to God?”.⁵ For the Corinthians to be choosing their own teachers, rather than receiving the ones God had given to them, was to act as if they were equal to God or in his place (ἀντίθεοι). It is for God alone to orchestrate his salvation, including the choosing, gifting and sending of those through whom he wishes to continue Christ’s pedagogical work. Before, however, we turn to consider these human teachers more fully, we ought to contemplate God as he is shown to us in 1 Corinthians 1-4, that is, in the Father, source and sender of Son and Spirit; in Christ, eternal wisdom of the Father made wisdom for us; and in the Spirit, who being very God searches all things and even the deep things of God.

The Father, Origin of the Divine Pedagogy

God the Father sends, but is not himself sent. He is the origin and the end of all God’s works as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. By the Son’s sacrifice and the new way of the Spirit, we are drawn into communion with the Father. We, like Jesus, live to follow our Father’s will, which we discern by prayer in the Spirit. The Father’s will is an eternal will, a will he shares with the Son and Spirit, and which he unfolds with neither hesitation nor change, neither uncertainty nor surprise, through the infinite waves of time. This will is that all would be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, a will whose end he pursues by drawing men and women into the body of his Son, the Church. As Paul puts it, “Faithful is the God who has called you into the communion of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). Commenting on the constancy of the Father’s will expressed in the sending of the Son, Haymo of Auxerre (d.875) writes, “The Father is called faithful because he is true and the fulfiller of his word”.⁶ The Father is true to his own intentions, faithful to what he promised by his Word through whom he created the world. A theology of the Father, however, receives little development in the history of exegesis on this passage, 1

⁴ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 5.

⁵ Theophylact of Ohrid, *PG*124: 564.

⁶ Haymo, *PL*117: 512.

Corinthians 1-4, certainly because of the lack of Paul's own use of πατήρ.⁷ It is those through whom the Father fulfills his plan of salvation, his οἰκονομία, to whom commentators understandably devote their attention: the Son who is God's wisdom and shares that wisdom with us and the Spirit who searches God's very depths and who dwells in us to make us his temple.

The Son, Eternal Wisdom Made Wisdom For Us

In two places in 1 Corinthians, Paul refers to Christ as "the wisdom of God" (1:24) or "wisdom from God" (1:30). While in 1 Cor. 1:24, Paul refers to him simply as "the wisdom of God", in 1:30 he says that Christ "became (ἐγενήθη)" or "was made (*factus est*) for us wisdom." These verses gave rise to reflection both on the status of the Son as God's eternal wisdom, as substantial wisdom, and to the Son's becoming wisdom for us in his taking on humanity. The early reformer Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1455-1536), or Jacob Faber Stapulensis, sums up well the tradition on the Son's nature as substantial wisdom. He writes, "And Christ is the Son of God: he is neither a wisdom made, nor was he ever made wisdom, but he is eternal wisdom, not made, not created, but eternally born from the eternal Father. Yet he was made wisdom for us".⁸ He is, in other words, "substantial wisdom", wisdom itself, not made nor created nor in any way becoming wisdom, but always and eternally wisdom, "the Word of God the Father".⁹ It is this Son, eternal wisdom, who takes on flesh in the person of Jesus, in order to become wisdom for us from God, sent to teach us in whom is our salvation.

The main line of interpretation for how it is that Christ was made wisdom for us begins, as is not uncommon, with John Chrysostom (c.347-407). In one of his homilies on

⁷ This distinguishes these chapters from, especially, John 14-16, another passage rich with teaching on the economy of the divine pedagogy. The trinitarianism of John is less evident here—there is, as mentioned, no naming of the Father in these chapters—but Paul's theology of Christ and the Spirit intends a similar account of single and coordinated divine agency among the persons as does John's gospel. For John, the Spirit who will come will lead the disciples into all truth by reminding and teaching them of Christ, the one sent by the Father; for Paul, he is called by God to be an apostle and sent by Christ to preach the gospel as the Spirit reveals to him and his listeners the deep mysteries of God. In 1 Corinthians the focus is on Christ and the Spirit in the history of salvation instead of the eternal intratrinitarian relations as in John. Aquinas, commenting on John 17:8 ("I gave them the words which you gave me"), perceives the Father giving teaching to the Son in his eternal generation in a way that 1 Corinthians does not open up: "Primum ponit per dationem doctrinae a patre.... Una [datio] quam dedit pater filio, unde dicit verba quae dedisti mihi, secundum generationem aeternam, in qua dedit pater verba filio, cum tamen ipse sit verbum patris" (*In Ioh.* 17.2.2201).

⁸ Lefèvre d'Étaples, *S. Pauli Ep.*, fol. 107v.

⁹ Haymo, *PL*117: 520.

Paul's letter, the famous preacher muses, "Why is it that he does not say, 'He made us wise,' but, 'He became wisdom for us'? This statement abundantly indicates the gift, as if he said, 'He gave himself to us'.... For he made us wise through deliverance from deception"¹⁰ and, adds Theophylact, "teaching the knowledge of God".¹¹ Commenting on the first half of 1 Cor. 1:30, "From him [i.e., God] you are in Christ Jesus," Chrysostom says that Christ "made us wise and just and sanctified", since he became for us our wisdom, justification, sanctification and redemption.¹² What it means, according to Chrysostom and the Greek tradition, for Christ to become wisdom for us, is for him to make us wise. The means by which he does this is delivering us from deception (Chrysostom) and teaching us the knowledge of God (Theophylact). Whether or not it was derived from the Greek tradition, this same understanding also appears in Carolingian-era Latin commentators, such as Sedulius Scottus (*fl.* 848-58) and Haymo of Auxerre.¹³

On the Latin side, Christ's status as the wisdom of God is associated from very early on with the knowledge of God. Ambrosiaster writes that Christ is the wisdom of God "because through him God is known".¹⁴ What it means for Christ to become wisdom for us is that he leads us to knowledge of God; we know God 'through him.' Atto of Vercelli (c.885-961) writes some six centuries later, "For he who was the true wisdom of the Father in the substance of divinity became wisdom for us through his humanity, since through him we have learned true wisdom, that is, the knowledge of the Trinity".¹⁵ The wisdom, then, which Christ becomes for us and teaches us is identified with the knowledge of God, and specifically, of the Trinity. While this has become well established, the way in which Christ communicates this knowledge to us will be the particular concern of the high middle ages. The Gloss (c.1100-1140), for instance, significantly modifies a quote from Augustine by framing it in terms of illumination. Reading "who was made for us wisdom" (1:30), the Gloss explains, "that is, enlightening us toward the truth. And therefore he is said to be wisdom for us 'because we converted to him in time, that is, in a certain time, in order to abide with him in eternity. And wisdom herself "was made flesh

¹⁰ Chrysostom, *PG*61: 42.

¹¹ Theophylact, *PG*124: 584.

¹² Chrysostom, *PG*61: 42.

¹³ Sedulius, *PL*103: 131; Haymo, *PL*117: 518.

¹⁴ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 17; quoted partially by Hervé, *PL*181: 826.

¹⁵ Atto of Vercelli, *PL*134: 304.

and will dwell among us” (Jn. 1:14)’. And this he did, that is, enlightening us”.¹⁶ Just slightly later Hervé of Bourg-Dieu (c.1080-c.1150) takes this new theme of illumination one step further to include the way Christ enlightens us, which is by participation in him. “Therefore”, Hervé writes, Christ “‘was made wisdom for us,’ that is, enlightening us toward the truth and knowledge of God.... The very one who in himself is eternal and unchangeable wisdom also became wisdom for us, since we, by participation in him, are in some way effected wise in order to rightly think wisely”.¹⁷ To this very clear lineage of ideas—making us wise, knowledge of God, illumination, participation—Nicholas of Amiens (1147-c.1200), a follower of Gilbert de la Porrée (c.1070-1154),¹⁸ adds one more element, namely, grace. In his intriguing and lengthy comments on 1 Cor. 1:30, Nicholas reflects on Christ’s status as eternal wisdom “without making” as well as the “fullness and abundance” of the grace of wisdom which he is able, after being made flesh, to confer on us for us to believe.¹⁹ From the wealth of this inheritance, Aquinas draws out an especially coherent and beautiful reflection.

For Aquinas, 1 Cor. 1:26-31 is a section about Christ’s preachers in general, before Paul turns to himself as a preacher in 2:1-5. In 1:26-27, the apostle tells us that not many of Christ’s preachers were wise or powerful or noble; in 1:30, Paul “shows how God fills these forementioned defects in his preachers through Christ. And first with regard to a defect of wisdom when he says, ‘who,’ namely Christ, ‘was made for us’ who preach faith, and through us to all the faithful, ‘wisdom,’ because holding to him who is the wisdom of God, and participating in him through grace, we are made wise. And this is ‘from God,’

¹⁶ Gloss, col. 207; quoted in Lombard, *PL*191: 1546-47. The Gloss is quoting Augustine, *trin.* 7.3; quoted in Florus of Lyons, *PL*119: 320.

¹⁷ Hervé, *PL*181: 829.

¹⁸ Nicholas of Amiens is the probable author of the so-called *Commentarius Porretanus*, a work on the Pauline epistles that has the unusual quality of commenting on a commentary, that of Gilbert de la Porrée (c.1070-1154). Thus, expanding on Gilbert’s as well as Paul’s words, his comments are often rich and expansive. On Nicholas’ probable authorship, see Heinrich Denifle, *Quellenbelege. Die abendländischen Schriftausleger bis Luther über Justitia Dei (Rom. 1,17) und Justificatio* (Mainz: Kirchheim, 1905), pp.344-46. Landgraf holds Denifle’s ascription indecisive (*Einführung in die Geschichte der theologischen Literatur der Frühscholastik* [Regensburg: Gregorius-Verlag Vorm. Friedrich Pustet, 1948], p.81); Martin accepts it (“Le péché originel d’après Gilbert de la Porrée (+ 1154) et son école,” *Revue d’Histoire Ecclesiastique* 13/1 [Jan. 1912]: 674-91, at pp.676-77). Cf. more recently, Lauge Olaf Nielsen, *Theology and Philosophy in the Twelfth-Century: A Study of Gilbert Porreta’s Thinking and the Theological Expositions of the Doctrine of the Incarnation During the Period 1130-1180*, trans. Ragnar Christophersen (Leiden: Brill, 1982), pp.41-42. Perhaps something can be added to this question by the examination of another work attributed to Nicholas: Mechthild Dreyer, ed., *Nikolaus von Amiens: Ars Fidei Catholicae – Ein Beispielwerk Axiomatischer Methode* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1993).

¹⁹ Nicholas, *Comm. Porr.*, pp.26-27.

who gave us Christ and draws us to him, as it says in John, ‘No one can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him’ (6:44). ‘This is your wisdom and understanding before the peoples’ (Deut. 4:6)”.²⁰ As with Hervé, for Aquinas, it is by participation in Christ that we are ourselves made wise; like Nicholas, this is from the fullness of Christ’s grace. For Aquinas this sounds an even more intimate note: it is by holding to (*inhaerendo*) Christ and being drawn to him that we are made wise. Our sharing in Christ, the wisdom of God, is a personal and close relationship, a kind of friendship. And yet, for Aquinas, this concerns in the first place Christ’s preachers, through whom others are brought to faith and come to share in Christ our wisdom. There is a process of mediation by which a first grace, the filling of the defect of wisdom in Christ’s preachers, leads to a further grace, the participation of all God’s faithful in Christ by faith.

A quite different stream of interpretation took hold in the Reformation, one not dependent on language of participation, illumination or even making us wise. Instead, this tradition focuses on Christ’s perfect revelation of the Father as his Wisdom and Word. While, however, it is most prominent in the Reformation, this reading is not absent from earlier commentators. Haymo of Auxerre, for example, writes that Christ, “the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24), is “rightly called the Wisdom and Word of the Father, since through him God the Father manifests himself to human beings, as, for example, a person manifests their will by their word. For this reason the Son himself says in the gospel, ‘Father, I have manifested your name to human beings’ (Jn. 17:6)”.²¹ The Reformation commentators themselves were especially concerned to show the Son’s unity with the Father, and how his revelation perfectly expresses the Father. For Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), “since the Son is coequal to and the image of the Father, the word and counsel of the Most High, of course he is the highest, single and true wisdom.... For Christ to be the wisdom of God is nothing other than for him to be God”.²² This identity between the Son and God is important for his revelatory role in his earthly mission; in order, that is, for him to reveal the Father perfectly, he ought to himself be the perfect expression of the Father, his Word or Wisdom. As Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) puts it, Christ is “indeed God by nature, who not only knows all things but also governs them. He

²⁰ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.4.71.

²¹ Haymo, *PL*117: 517.

²² Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 18v.

was sent to us by the Father that he may teach us the true, sound and heavenly wisdom 'in which are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col. 2:3)".²³ The Father sends us his own perfect image or expression, his own wisdom, in order for us to receive the revelation in which he is perfectly and fully known.

John Calvin is particularly clear at this point. For Christ to become wisdom for us (1 Cor. 1:30) means that "we obtain the absolute perfection of wisdom in him. For in him the Father revealed himself to us to the fullest, that we should not desire to know the Father apart from him. This is also the meaning of Col. 2:3, 'In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge'".²⁴ Christ is for us the 'absolute perfection of wisdom' precisely because he reveals the Father *ad plenum*, to the fullest extent. Thus, there is nowhere outside of Christ that we ought to look for knowledge of God; in fact, Calvin will say that we should not even desire it elsewhere. All our desire to know God ought to be centred on Christ. On 1 Cor. 1:5, "you have been enriched in him [i.e., Christ], in all speech and all knowledge", Calvin focuses especially on what it means for us to be 'in him.' (While some prefer to translate the Greek as 'through him,' Calvin prefers 'in him' because of its "expression and energy".²⁵) "For 'we are enriched in Christ'", he writes, "because we are members of his body, and to the degree that we are attached to him, or even further, are made one with him, he shares with us whatever he receives from the Father".²⁶ There is, for Calvin, a deepening relationship with Christ as his body that provides the place in which we come to share in the wisdom of the Father, in himself. And here we see that although Calvin avoids the language of participation, he is not far from Aquinas: for the latter, it is by participation in Christ through grace and 'holding to' (*inhaerendo*) him that we become wise, while for the former, it is through being 'attached' to Christ and even becoming united with him that we receive his perfect expression of the Father, the wisdom he himself is.

At the same time that these Reformers are closely attending to Christ's nature as eternal wisdom, others are beginning to focus on his human nature. The first commentator who seems to draw attention to Christ's humanity as itself the wisdom of God is the late medieval Carthusian, Denis de Ryckel (1402-1471). Although he expresses

²³ Zwingli, *Ep. aliq. Pauli*, p.452.

²⁴ Calvin, *CO49*: 331.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, col. 310.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Christ's divine identity (in strongly Thomistic terms) as the "Word of the mind of the Father",²⁷ he goes on to say that "in his human nature he is also called the power and the wisdom of God" because of the "fullest participation and particular shining forth" of God's wisdom in his humanity. For "the wisdom of God is unspeakably manifested in the incarnation of Christ, his suffering and salvation of the world, as, namely, through the incarnation of God humanity is deified and through his humiliation humanity is lifted up, through his death humanity is made alive, through his undue penalties humanity is absolved from penalties due, and through his love humanity is restored, who had perished through the devil's envy".²⁸ Special attention is given to the character of Christ's redemptive mission as itself an expression of God's wisdom. Although Christ is in himself the unchanging, eternal wisdom, in his humanity he also perfectly manifests the wisdom of God.

Cardinal Cajetan (1469-1534) writes along similar lines, "So although this is true of the divine nature of Christ (that he is God, and divine wisdom and power), yet the literal sense of this present text speaks about Christ as a human being, because his suffering, crucifixion and death is the power and wisdom of God suffering to be crucified and die. For he made use of his own suffering, cross and death as power and wisdom to conquer the world and the devil, to redeem the human race, to render human beings immortal, and to restore what is on earth and in heaven".²⁹ Although Cajetan's theology and even expression is close to Denis', there is an important and clear difference. While Denis would allow that Paul is speaking of Christ as the wisdom of God in his two natures, Cajetan argues that here the apostle (in the 'literal sense' of this 'present text') is speaking only of Christ's humanity. The cross of Christ, which looks like foolishness, is in fact the true wisdom of God.

One would not expect such a theology to be absent from the Protestant Reformers either. Bullinger, while he acknowledges Christ as 'coequal' to the Father, can also express quite dramatically the wisdom of the crucifixion. "So then", he writes, "in order to preserve the human race and show mercy to us, [God] at the same time punished sin most severely, and chose his Son, who condemned by the most terrible

²⁷ Aquinas, *ST* 1a.34.1.

²⁸ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 38r-v.

²⁹ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 42r.

sentence of the cross and affixed to the cross, was of the justice and mercy of God, that is, of the heavenly wisdom, the clearest mirror".³⁰ The wisdom of God is, in this case, not shared in by participation or union with Christ, but rather by receiving the benefits of the cross' inversion, the application of Christ's punishment for our sin to our situation before God's judgment. This shall-we-say forensic theology is a fair distance from Aquinas' and Calvin's attention to our spiritual life participating in Christ or being united to him, in which we are made wise as he shares with us whatever he hears from the Father.

Of course, one need not see a forensic account of the cross' benefits in Paul's understanding of Christ as the wisdom of God. Sebastian Meyer (1465-1545), another Reformed commentator, while he writes similarly of the paradox of the cross and its punishment, is more concerned than Bullinger with the work the true wisdom of the cross does in our souls. On 1 Cor. 1:23, "But we preach Christ crucified, an obstacle to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles," Meyer comments, "While this teaching does seem like foolishness to Jews and Gentiles and those who teach and receive it are considered the most stupid, nevertheless the highest wisdom of God in fact appears in those things in which, by hidden counsel, it pleased God to succour the ruined world, that is, by the death of his Son, in which he allures us to love of God and calls us away from the love of the world".³¹ The cross of Christ, while of course a means of overcoming sin and death, does not, for Meyer, do so merely from the outside. Rather, the cross itself is a kind of mechanism by which God draws us to himself. The cross moves our hearts to abandon the world for this gloriously loving God. And it is by this detachment and attraction of our heart's love that we come to be wise. For Christ is the wisdom of God, Meyer continues, "by which he creates, preserves, orders and governs all things, and by which anyone who understands at last truly understands. For through him God, and all other things, are truly known".³² With Meyer, then, some of the patristic and medieval themes reemerge, for instance, being made wise with the knowledge of God and all other things through him, alongside the more recent stress on the crucified humanity of the Son as not only the power or justice but also the true wisdom of God. Meyer also reemphasizes (in the notably Augustinian language of love and drawing), a theme important to Aquinas and

³⁰ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 19r.

³¹ Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 8r.

³² *Ibid.*

Calvin: drawing close to God in Christ. It is by having our hearts drawn to Christ, holding to him, participating in his life and becoming ever more one with him, that we come to taste the wisdom of God which he is eternally with the Father. And this unity with him is something we have by his Spirit.

The Spirit, All-Knowing and Causing Us to Know

An understanding of the Holy Spirit, like the Son, was developed mainly through two verses of Paul's letter. In 1 Cor. 3:16, Paul asks rhetorically, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you?" Commentators were quick to notice that this verse suggests the Spirit's divinity. Ambrosiaster, the earliest Latin, writes that "since the Spirit of God is said to live in us, it indicates that the Holy Spirit is to be understood to be God".³³ This reading of the question would, of course, stand all the way through the Reformation. It "visibly declares" the Spirit's divinity, according to Lancelotto Politi (1483-1553), known religiously as Ambrosius Catharinus Politus, O.P.;³⁴ for Calvin, it is a "clear witness" to this reality.³⁵

But another verse would serve as a subtler indication of the same truth. In 2:10, Paul writes, "God revealed to us through the Spirit [what he has prepared for those who love him (v.9)], for the Spirit searches out all things, even the deep things of God." To be able to search as far as the depths of God is not a creaturely ability, but an ability only appropriate to God himself; thus, we have in this statement only a slightly less direct proof for the Spirit's divinity. Someone writing under the name of St. Jerome, perhaps in the latter half of the ninth century,³⁶ claims, "This is a very clear statement against heretics who say the Holy Spirit is a creature, from which it is shown not only that he is not a creature, but even that he alone probes the most inward and deep things of God, and so that he is of the same nature and substance with Christ".³⁷ Bullinger, several centuries later, also reads this verse as both implying that the Spirit is not a creature and that he is, therefore, God. "This sentence", he writes, "makes the Spirit coequal with God. For not one of all the creatures knows these secret things of God except God himself. But

³³ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 38.

³⁴ Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.157.

³⁵ Calvin, *CO*49: 358.

³⁶ His commentary, found in *PL*30, is heavily dependent on Sedulius Scottus (*fl.* 848-58).

³⁷ Ps.-Jerome, *PL*30: 723.

the Spirit knows, and therefore the Spirit is not a creature but God. Since, therefore, this [knowing] is the office of God alone by the Spirit, it follows that by the divine Spirit alone is the heavenly wisdom revealed”.³⁸ In both cases, then, we have arguments from the Spirit’s functions:³⁹ on 3:16, it is the Spirit’s dwelling in us to make us a temple of God that indicates his presence is divine, and on 2:10, it is the Spirit’s searching of God’s depths that bespeaks a divine ability. The Spirit, of course, not only searches out all the things of God, but also shares them with those he indwells.

Again, Ambrosiaster provides the main line of interpretation. “Here”, in 1 Cor. 2:10-11, “the Spirit of God taught us what he knows naturally and not being taught. And he taught us of the mystery of Christ since he is not only the Spirit of God, but also of Christ”.⁴⁰ Although Ambrosiaster cuts off one false interpretation, namely that the Spirit was taught what he knows, others would expend more energy in foreclosing another subtler, though still false, reading. Chrysostom, for instance, explained (with the whole Greek tradition following him) that this “searching is here indicative not of ignorance, but of precise knowledge”.⁴¹ That the Spirit searches out God’s depths is an assurance to us, his students, that he gives us a precise knowledge of divine reality. Bruno, the founder of the Carthusian order (c.1030-1101), or one of his followers,⁴² takes the verse in this sense. ““For the Spirit of God searches all things,” not that there is anything unknown that he possesses, for which he would have to search, but because he opens up to us everything that is investigated by the most in-depth search”.⁴³ Yet even this characterization of the Spirit’s searching might seem too creaturely. Thomas Aquinas applies the final corrections. “This is not to be so understood”, he writes, “as if it came by inquiring in a certain way, but that he knows perfectly and even the innermost parts of any and all things, as a human being sometimes knows what they carefully search for”.⁴⁴ The Spirit’s mode of knowledge is the same as the Father’s and Son’s, that is, he knows all

³⁸ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 23v.

³⁹ As, classically, in Basil the Great’s *De spiritu sancto* (e.g., 13.29: “Πῶς γὰρ οἰκειώσει Θεῷ ὁ ἀλλότριος;”).

⁴⁰ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL81/2*: 28.

⁴¹ Chrysostom, *Hom. 7.8*, PG61: 59; quoted in John of Damascus, PG95: 585; quoted with modifications in Theodoret of Cyrrhus, PG82: 244; Theophylact of Ohrid, PG124: 592.

⁴² Jean Châtillon sees the authorship as doubtful, and suggests Raoul of Laon or John of Tours as candidates: “La Bible dans les Ecoles du XIIe siècle,” in *Le moyen âge et la Bible*, eds. Pierre Riché and Guy Lobrichon (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984), p.172.

⁴³ Bruno the Carthusian, PL153: 134.

⁴⁴ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.2.102. Cf. Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 46v.

things in a single comprehensive moment of vision. As Aquinas explains, “But the Holy Spirit, who is in God himself as consubstantial with the Father and the Son, by himself sees the secret things of divinity, as it says in Wisdom, ‘For there is in her’, that is, the wisdom of God, ‘also a holy spirit of understanding, having all power, seeing all things’ (7:22-23)”.⁴⁵ The Holy Spirit, himself God, sees and knows all things perfectly, and just as the Son in his humanity reveals the Father *ad plenum*, the Spirit brings us to understand all divine reality, even the deep things of God. As Calvin puts it, “Nothing that is in God himself escapes his Spirit”.⁴⁶

There is another reading of this searching of the Spirit, one first produced by Augustine. On his account, the Spirit is said to search out all things “not because he who knows everything searches, but because the Spirit was given to you, who causes you to search, and what his gift makes you do he is said to do, because without him you would not do it”.⁴⁷ Thus, by a kind of metonymy, ‘the Spirit searches all things’ is taken to mean ‘the Spirit causes us to search out all things.’ Atto of Vercelli ties all the forementioned themes together wonderfully and concisely:

For since the Holy Spirit is from God and is himself God, therefore, he knows all things that are of God. But Paul adds ‘the deep things of God’ to show that he naturally knows every power and foreknowledge of God, which is altogether impossible for a creature. And for this reason the Holy Spirit is shown to be true God, and not a creature but the Creator. For ‘he searches all things,’ not because he does not know, in order to find out, but because nothing is left out from what he knows. He searches not in order to find out, since he knows all things; rather, he who was given to you, the Spirit, causes you to search. For what you do by his help he is said to do, without whom you are not able.⁴⁸

For Atto and the medieval tradition, then, the Spirit’s searching is really a way of saying that he causes us to search out divine realities. Being himself God, the Spirit has a perfect and simultaneous grasp of all divine truth and wisdom, a grasp that ‘leaves nothing out.’ What, though, does Paul mean by the ‘deep things of God’?

In reviewing what commentators have identified as the ‘deep things’ there will inevitably be some overlap with what they identify as the “wisdom we speak among the perfect” (1 Cor. 2:6). This is to be expected, of course, since it is this wisdom which “none

⁴⁵ Ibid., 2.2.105.

⁴⁶ Calvin, CO49: 341.

⁴⁷ Augustine, *en. Ps.* 52 §5; quoted in Lanfranc of Bec, PL150: 162.

⁴⁸ Atto of Vercelli, PL134: 310.

of the rulers of this age understood" (v.8), but which "God revealed to us through the Spirit" (v.10a), the Spirit who "searches out all things, even the deep things of God" (v.10b). While the various interpretations of the 'deep things' tend to be more formal than those of the 'wisdom' for the 'perfect,' they should be kept in mind at that later stage.⁴⁹ Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), the early Catholic reformer, gives an especially formal definition of these deep things. "Since he is divine", Erasmus writes, "and came forth from God, he probes even the most hidden and tucked away secrets of God, where human curiosity does not reach".⁵⁰ He adds that "those things which are hidden away in the divine mind and counsel no one knows but the eternal Spirit, who is most interior to God, and for this reason he is an accomplice to him in all things".⁵¹ The 'deep things,' in Erasmus' paraphrase of Paul's letter, are God's 'secrets,' elements of his 'mind' and 'counsel' to which human curiosity has no access. But he offers no further indication of what these secrets might be. Other commentators are more forthcoming.

Sebastian Meyer, uniquely though suggestively, believes that these 'deep things' are "the natures of things as they are created by God, and to what end they are created".⁵² The all-seeing Spirit, who hovered over the waters of creation, knows not only all that has been made, but also the destiny of each creature. Yet while this is, of course, something the Spirit knows, Cajetan will argue that this is not deep knowledge, but so to speak lays on the surface of the divine wisdom. "Indeed", he comments, "regarding the plans relating to the natural order of the universe, they are as if clearly appearing in God; the purposes, however, regarding the mystery of the incarnate Word, they are as if the inward depths of God, as if laying within the inner counsel of God".⁵³ Cajetan's reading of this passage is indebted to Aquinas' understanding of 1 Cor. 2:6, in which "the deep reasons for the incarnation" are among the 'wisdom we speak to the perfect';⁵⁴ the course of the natural order, on the other hand, and the events of Christ's earthly mission, are the more evident things. Interpreting, however, the 'deep things of God' as relating to Christ more generally, and not the hidden reasons behind the incarnation, has a long pedigree in the history of exegesis.

⁴⁹ See chapter three, "The Content of Divine Wisdom."

⁵⁰ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 865; quoted by Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.189.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, col. 865; quoted by Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.189.

⁵² Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 15r.

⁵³ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 43v.

⁵⁴ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.1.75. See ch. 3, n. 135.

This relationship is often developed in reflection, again, on the identity of the Spirit. In 1 Cor. 2:11-12, Paul writes, “For what person knows the things of that person except the spirit of that person in them? In the same way, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit who is from God. Now we have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may know the things given us by God.” Atto of Vercelli, reflecting on this verse in the tenth century interpreted these ‘things of God’ as the “mystery of Christ”. He writes, “Since the Holy Spirit is of one substance with God, therefore all things ‘which are of God’ he naturally knows himself and teaches us. He also teaches the mystery of Christ, since he is not only the Spirit of the Father, but also of the Son. Therefore, ‘no one knows the things that are of God except the Spirit of God’ (1 Cor. 2:11), since whoever knows them, knows them by the Spirit of God”.⁵⁵ Thus, the Spirit shares with us the things ‘which are of God,’ that is, the things of Christ, the mystery of Christ. Along similar lines, the Greek exegete Theophylact of Ohrid writes, “‘But the Spirit who is from God,’ that is, the Spirit of the same substance with God, who is of his substance, it is he we have as a teacher. ‘In order that we may know the things given to us by God.’ The Spirit, he says, is light, and we received this light in order that we may know the things covered over for a time, being enlightened by him. And what are these? ‘The things given to us by God,’ that is, surrounding the dispensation of Christ”.⁵⁶ Or as the Lutheran Georg Maior (1502-1574) says, “But ‘the depths of God’ he here chiefly calls the benefits of God, which are shown to us in Christ”.⁵⁷ The Spirit is our teacher, the Spirit who is of the same οὐσία with the Father and Son. Since he searches the deep things of God and reveals them to us, we come to know by his instruction what God has purposed to give us. And this giving is centred in what Maior terms the ‘benefits of God,’ and Theophylact the ‘dispensation of Christ,’ the οἰκονομία of salvation. The Spirit knows fully and in a single gaze the entirety of God’s plan both for creation and for its redemption in Christ and he teaches us, in order that we may know. Further, this pedagogy of the Spirit is itself a part of God’s οἰκονομία, God’s plan to bring the world to know the wisdom of the crucifixion of his Son, and so bring them to salvation.

⁵⁵ Atto of Vercelli, *PL*134: 310.

⁵⁶ Theophylact, *PG*124: 593.

⁵⁷ Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 31r.

Thomas Aquinas at this point draws on the language of John's gospel in order to describe the Spirit's work in leading us to know Christ. He comments, "For since the Holy Spirit is 'the Spirit of truth' (Jn. 15:26), as proceeding from the Son who is the truth of the Father, in those to whom he is sent he inspires truth, just as also the Son, sent from the Father, makes the Father known, as it says in Mt. 11:27, 'No one knows the Father except the Son, and those to whom the Son wishes to reveal him'".⁵⁸ "In the same way", he adds slightly later, commenting on this text of Matthew, "no one knows the things of God the Father and Son, except the Holy Spirit and those who receive him".⁵⁹ The Spirit, since he is the Spirit of truth, reveals the Son who is the truth of the Father. Thus, in bringing us to understand τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, the things of God, he enlightens us to understand Christ and his works, and the Father whose truth he is. Wolfgang Musculus will see a similar trinitarian economy operating in his comments on the "testimony of God" (1 Cor. 2:1). He also reads it through the same passage of John: "You should understand this as the testimony which God himself gives to his Son through the gospel ministry by the power of the Spirit,... of which Christ says in John 15:26, 'When the helper comes, the Spirit of truth, etc., he will present testimony to me'".⁶⁰ For the majority of commentators, then, the 'deep things' the Spirit searches out and the 'things of God' which only he knows relate to Christ, to his dispensation, his benefits and his truth. It would, finally, not be unfair to read Calvin's comments in the same light. "Understand", he explains, "the 'depths' not as secret judgments, inquiry into which is forbidden for us, but rather the whole teaching on salvation, which would be presented in the Scriptures in vain, if God did not raise our minds up to him by his Spirit".⁶¹ The Spirit's work, then, is to teach God's people the divine wisdom, the wisdom surrounding the οἰκονομία τοῦ Χριστοῦ, the 'dispensation of Christ' (Theophylact), or *salutis doctrina*, the 'teaching of salvation' (Calvin), or more simply, the 'truth' (Aquinas). The Spirit accomplishes this not only by giving "a demonstration of power and of the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:4) to the preaching of those Christ commissioned as apostles,⁶² but also by 'raising up our minds' to God, to see according to our little human capacity what the Spirit ever sees in an unfading vision.

⁵⁸ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.2.100.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.2.107. Cf. Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 43v.

⁶⁰ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 48.

⁶¹ Calvin, *CO49*: 341.

⁶² Cf. chapter four, "New Life in the Spirit."

This act of teaching is not an occasional, extrinsic intervention on the Spirit's part. Rather, to return a verse treated earlier, we are temples of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 3:16), and he lives in us. It is by this indwelling that he continually oversees, guides and, at times, instructs us. As Hervé of Bourg-Dieu says, "For that mind which the Spirit of God fills, he enlightens".⁶³ And this illumination is coordinated by the Spirit with all the other elements of the rich spiritual life he brings to us. Cajetan writes in this regard, "And it does not say 'he visits,' but 'he dwells,' to show that the Holy Spirit is in the Church of the faithful as a dweller, and so puts their souls to spiritual uses, like one who dwells in a home puts it to one's own uses".⁶⁴ Unlike a guest, who only visits a house from time and time and lacks the freedom to dispose of its contents as she wills, the Holy Spirit lives in our souls as a temple, as a home, and makes use of everything he finds there as his own. Thus, the teaching he gives us is but one part of the whole indwelling life the Spirit practices by making use of our mind, heart, soul and strength for his own purposes. "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (6:19-20).

Aquinas highlights two powers the Spirit gives to the soul in this indwelling life: faith, which is connected with knowledge, and love. He contrasts this life with that of "the spirit of this world" (1 Cor. 2:12). "Therefore", Aquinas comments, "the spirit of this world can be called the wisdom of this world and love of the world, by which a human being is impelled to do what is of the world; yet the holy apostles did not receive this spirit, rejecting and disdaining the world, but received the Holy Spirit, by whom their hearts were enlightened and set on fire for the love of God".⁶⁵ This enlightening and firing activity brings to birth two new qualities in the human soul, namely, faith and love. It is by this divine moving that the human person becomes able to know God intimately and to love him, and all this takes place as the Spirit comes to dwell in a human being as in his own home. As Aquinas explains, "But God is said to dwell as if in a family home in the saints, whose minds are fitted for God through knowledge and love, and even if they are not presently knowing and loving, nevertheless they have through grace the capacity for

⁶³ Hervé, *PL*181: 835.

⁶⁴ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 45v.

⁶⁵ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.2.106.

faith and love”.⁶⁶ It is the Spirit who brings the grace of God to dwell in the human heart and makes it *capax Dei*, fitted for God, through the knowledge he teaches that person by opening up the understanding to grasp all that God has done in Christ and the love that he causes to come to life through this knowledge.

The very Spirit of God, of the same being with the Father and the Son, lives in us as in his own home. He teaches us by opening us up to and opening up to us the riches of Scripture’s witness and the Church’s preaching and teaching about Christ, the Son of God and eternal wisdom, who has become wisdom for us in taking on humanity. The Son and Spirit have in turn been sent to us by the Father, the origin and destination of all God’s saving works. “The Father”, as Haymo writes, “is faithful, because he is true and the fulfiller of his word”.⁶⁷ The θέλημα θεοῦ, the will of God the Father (1 Cor. 1:1), is constant: he pursues the people he has made to find their rest in himself, even as they foolishly seek their rest in ten thousand created things. Together, the Father, Son and Spirit inseparably work the salvation of the world, of which the teaching of humanity forms a crucial and indispensable piece. By this divine pedagogy, God seeks to bring us to *Trinitatis cognitio*, the ‘knowledge of the Trinity’ (Atto); θεογνωσία, the ‘knowledge of God’ (Theophylact); or as Paul himself calls it, θεοῦ σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίῳ, “the wisdom of God in a mystery” (2:7).

Conclusion

God is a teacher who, unlike human teachers, has always and eternally had both the knowledge and the ability in and of himself to be a teacher; who does not become wise, does not, that is, learn from another the wisdom which he shares with his students, but rather possesses and is the wisdom by which all become wise; who, moreover, is not one link in a chain of teachers passing from generation to generation—not even the first link—but is rather the divine teacher, omnipotently overseeing and intimately indwelling the human participants in this divine pedagogy, this wondrous οἰκονομία. Christ is the eternal wisdom of God made wisdom for us and his Spirit intimately knows that wisdom and shares it with us while living within us. That God our teacher is thus Father, Son and Spirit bears important implications for how the divine pedagogy is worked out: God does

⁶⁶ Ibid., 3.3.173.

⁶⁷ Haymo, *PL117*: 512; cf. n. 6 above.

not teach us merely extrinsically or occasionally, but intimately and in and through history.

Indeed, God's pedagogy is a task he has undertaken throughout history, from the formation of humanity, from generation to generation. "The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations" (Ps. 33:11). Yet this does not mean that God has always pursued this education of the human race in the same way; in fact, the incarnation, as has already been hinted, marks a decisive break in the history of the divine pedagogy, the way in which God teaches us his wisdom. In the incarnation, eternal wisdom comes near to us and dwells among us; by the Spirit, the wisdom Christ is for us dwells within us: "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (Rom. 10:8; cf. Deut. 30:14). This approach of eternal wisdom into humble human flesh is the decisive act of God's teaching and conditions how it is theologians learn and pass on God's wisdom.

Chapter Two | The Divine Pedagogy in History

“For all the things that are, ‘are yours,’ that is, are granted to you for your benefit and servitude,
and clearly the world is ours if we suppose its course to be not by chance or fortune,
but by God’s arrangement.”
— Gregorio Primaticci

Theologians teach at a certain moment in the history of salvation, the time following the ascension of Christ and outpouring of the Spirit and preceding the return of Christ to judge the living and the dead. By no means has God always taught as he does in this time, indwelling human beings by his Spirit and instructing them in incarnate wisdom. This is a change that came about when, “in the fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4), God himself took on human existence to speak to the world no longer by prophets and angels but by his own Son (cf. Heb. 1:1-2). The incarnation is the crucial turning point in the history of the divine pedagogy, because it displays God’s decision to teach us by another way than he had previously. Seeing that the Gentiles were failing to know him through their contemplation of the created world, and that the covenant with Israel was not yet perfect because put into place by angels (Gal. 3:19), God undertook a new method of teaching: he sent his Son into the world. God deigned to become close to us and teach us in person, so to speak, rather than by intermediaries.

The Economy of the Divine Pedagogy Before the Incarnation

God had chosen one nation of all the earth to receive his law, his special instruction. As Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562) writes, God “adopted for himself this special people in order to communicate a fuller knowledge of himself to them than to the other nations”.¹ For this reason, one might have expected Israel to be more ready to receive Christ, the eternal wisdom of God made wisdom for us, because they were, as Aquinas writes, “used to being divinely instructed, as it says in Deut. 8:5, ‘he educated him and taught him’”; instead, the gospel was as much an “obstacle to the Jews” as “foolishness to the Gentiles” (1 Cor. 1:23). The Jews were accustomed to great signs of power—“he did wonders in the land of Egypt” (Ps. 78:12)—and thus sought similar signs from whoever brought a new teaching. Greeks, on the other hand, were “practised in the study of wisdom, the wisdom I say which is grasped through the reasons of worldly things, of which Jer. 9:23 says, ‘Let

¹ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 25r.

the wise person not glory in wisdom”’. These Greeks, then, by valuing their worldly wisdom too highly, tended to “judge every teaching proposed to them according to the rule of human wisdom”.² So rather than rising from created things to the One who created them, the nations took the limits of their observations to indicate the limits of reality, and measured any other teaching, including the teaching about the crucified and risen Christ, by their human conclusions. As Denis the Carthusian writes, expanding on Aquinas’ comments, the Gentiles “were accustomed to insisting on human arguments. Therefore, none of them knew God salvifically through their wisdom, with regard to those things which concern salvation”.³ Thus, both Jew and Gentile, who had previously been educated differently and unevenly under the divine pedagogy, were brought together under the new pedagogy of the incarnate wisdom. To the new people comprised of Jews and Gentiles, the Church, Christ gave teachers (Eph. 4:12; cf. Matt. 28:19-20).

For those who had their eyes opened to see the wisdom that really resides in Christ, human and worldly wisdom, with its pride and arguments, was left behind, as was the shadow of Israel’s law. As Erasmus paraphrases 1 Cor. 1:24, “Now Jews do not desire wonders, who have discovered greater in Christ, nor Greeks wisdom, once having discovered Christ to be the fount of all wisdom”.⁴ This ‘discovery’ of Christ himself is the intention of God’s teaching of the world. The incarnate Son, in his suffering, crucifixion and resurrection, is the true wisdom of God and the true power of God (1 Cor. 1:24). According to the law of the Jews and reason of the Gentiles, it could only look like foolishness: they needed a re-education from the ground up in order to comprehend it, a re-education that is dependent on faith. This is something that cannot be accomplished by theologians, humanly speaking; rather, God’s power and Spirit are decisive in this transformation as he brings people to faith in Christ. God makes use of teachers of theology in this process, but they alone cannot help people understand how Christ is God’s true wisdom and follow him in the new way of the Spirit.

² Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.3.57.

³ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 38r.

⁴ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 863; quoted in Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.185.

The Change in the Economy in 1 Corinthians 1:21

The vast majority of reflection on this change in the execution of the divine pedagogy comes as commentary on a single verse of 1 Corinthians: “For since in the wisdom of God the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe” (1:21). In expositing this verse, commentators were especially concerned with the wisdom of the nations, discernible in the creation. They sought to elaborate two things: first, the identity of σοφία, the wisdom, through which the world did not know God; and second, the great difference in method between this wisdom and the saving proclamation, and why this difference might have ‘pleased God.’ This Gentile wisdom, or wisdom of the world, is, however, almost always read as equivalent with the wisdom of God, as if Paul had said, “For since the world, in the wisdom of God, did not know God through this wisdom of God...” God’s wisdom is seen as something built into the creation, observable in its structures and entities, and since God himself made the world in his wisdom, to come to know this wisdom is to know the wisdom of God. However, Paul tells us that the world did not, in fact, know God through this ‘wisdom of God,’ even if they had been able to come to know him through it. As a result, God sees this lack of understanding on humanity’s part and begins to teach them in a different way.

Early Greek Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 1:21

John Chrysostom, once again, initiates this way of reading 1 Cor. 1:21, and his interpretation, while of course undergoing development and reinterpretation, sets the main parameters of exegesis until the end of the Reformation period. There are two central facets to his understanding of this verse. The first has to do with the knowledge of God that could be obtained through creatures. Chrysostom explains, “What does it mean, ‘In the wisdom of God’? In what appears through his works; it is through these that God wanted to be made known. Thus, God arranged such creatures, in order that by drawing connections from what is observed, him who made them would be admired”. It was God’s will, Chrysostom argues, that he should be known ἀναλόγως, ‘by drawing connections’ between observable realities and their maker, and that this knowledge should lead to worship. But of course, the world did not properly know God ἀναλόγως,

but stopped short at the creature. “Therefore”, Chrysostom continues, “since the world did not want to come to know God through this wisdom, he persuaded them through what was considered to be the foolishness of the proclamation, not through reasoning, but through faith. So it is that where there is the wisdom of God, there is no more need of human wisdom”.⁵ Because, he claims, God’s intention for this wisdom obtainable through creatures was not fulfilled, God chose another method of bringing humanity to knowledge of him, that is, persuasion through proclamation. This new way of teaching makes the old redundant. Or as Chrysostom puts it a bit later on, “And thus God commanded from the beginning that he was to be followed by the understanding of the creation. But since they did not want to, making clear through the attempt that they were not sufficient to themselves, God then led them to himself by another way”.⁶ This turn to proclamation in the divine pedagogy, and away from the observation of the creation, was a decision on God’s part to make up for human insufficiency by teaching ‘another way’ (ἐτέρω), deploying a method more suited to the condition of fallen humanity.

Theodoret of Cyrrhus (c.393-457), commenting about half a century after Chrysostom, follows much the same line of thought. Instead, however, of two kinds of wisdom, he identifies three: a rational wisdom, by which we distinguish actions, discover techniques and knowledge, and become able to know God; a natural wisdom, which we see in the creation, and by which we distinguish natures and living beings; and the wisdom of the Saviour, which, because the world did not want to obtain a “natural knowledge from God in order to be led through the creation to worship the Creator, the lover of humanity undertook salvation in another way, and delivered them from deception through what the uncomprehending called foolishness”.⁷ For Theodoret, as for Chrysostom, there was a form of wisdom (or two) through which humanity could have come to know God, but since they did not, in fact, come to know him by this path, God acted ‘another way’ (ἐτέρω) to bring them to knowledge of himself. Theophylact of Ohrid, our final Greek commentator, contrasts Chrysostom’s wisdom that ‘appears through God’s works’ with the “wisdom of words” (1 Cor. 1:17a) which causes humanity not to make proper use of God’s wisdom. Theophylact writes, “For since, ‘in the wisdom’

⁵ Chrysostom, *Hom.* 4.2, PG61: 32; quoted by John of Damascus, PG95: 577.

⁶ *Ibid.*, *Hom.* 5.2, PG61: 41.

⁷ Theodoret of Cyrrhus, PG82: 236.

appearing through visible creatures, for the heavens and the earth and every creature proclaim the Creator, ‘the world,’ that is, those whose mind is on the things of the world, who are clearly impeded through a wisdom that has its focus on fine speech, ‘did not know God, it pleased God through the illiteracy of those preaching,’ which people think is foolishness, but really is not, ‘to save those who believe’”. According to Theophylact, the Greeks were misled by the trust they placed in their wisdom of words, their empty rhetorical elegance. Even though they, he says, had “the wisdom of God as a teacher, which was clearly observed in created things”, they were made unable to hear this teacher’s words, because of their attraction to the empty words of human “external wisdom”.⁸ While Theophylact does not use Chrysostom and Theodoret’s ἐτέρω, he does intentionally draw a contrast between the problematic wisdom of words, and the new way of salvation God enacts through the ἰδιωτεία, what I have translated as ‘illiteracy,’ of his preachers. God needed to take a new path to ensure that the Greeks would learn the right lesson, that is, that they would no longer put their trust in eloquent human wisdom, but in the reality of Christ’s cross.

Carolingian and Scholastic Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 1:21

In the Latin tradition of commentary, Sedulius Scottus, whether knowingly or unknowingly, continues Chrysostom’s interpretation. “The creation of the world”, he writes, “was shaped in the wisdom of God, in which through natural wisdom, which was given and created for this purpose, one ought to have known the one who made it. But since humanity did not know God, other medicines were provided to help them”, that is, the medicines of the gospel. Sedulius continues, “Therefore, ‘through his wisdom’ is to be understood as ‘through natural wisdom,’ which was given so that God might be known; this ‘natural wisdom’ can also be called the ‘wisdom of God,’ because it was created by God, or because the wisdom of God is certainly the spring and the natural creator of wisdom in humanity”.⁹ Like Theodoret, who speaks of φυσικὴν γνῶσιν, a ‘natural knowledge’ of God, Sedulius speaks of *sapientiam naturalem*, a ‘natural wisdom,’ whereby God may be known. This wisdom can even be called the ‘wisdom of God,’ since God built his wisdom into the creation and the etchings of this divine wisdom source or

⁸ Theophylact of Ohrid, PG124: 580.

⁹ Sedulius Scottus, PL103: 130.

create a cognate wisdom in human beings. Haymo of Auxerre, writing shortly after Sedulius, provides an interpretation that stands out amidst the tradition. On his reading, “in the wisdom of God” and “the world through wisdom” refer to two different wisdoms, one divine—Christ, the wisdom of the Father—and one human and worldly.¹⁰ This is striking both for its lack of reflection on wisdom in the creation, a commonplace in the tradition, as well as its rarity in the history of exegesis: while, as we shall see momentarily, Hervé follows Haymo’s interpretation of these two wisdoms, he dramatically reframes them.

The early twelfth century sees a new flowering of different readings of 1 Cor. 1:21. I begin with those of the Gloss and Robert of Melun, and move to Hervé of Bourg-Dieu, through whom it seems Aquinas receives the standard line of interpretation. The Gloss, compiled in the early decades of the 1100s, gives space to a quotation from Gregory the Great (c.540-604). Here the renowned preacher explains, “It is as if Paul said: Since the world would by no means, through its wisdom, find God who is wisdom, God was pleased that the world would know, through the foolish things of humanity, God made human, insofar as his wisdom would descend to our follies, and that the world would see, with our blindness enlightened by the mud of his flesh, the light of heavenly wisdom”.¹¹ Thus, the reading that comes via the Gloss is, in line with the tradition, bleak about the prospects for human wisdom apart from the enlightening flesh of Christ. Robert of Melun (c.1100-1167), in stark contrast, follows Abelard in his boldness about what is discernible in the creation, even identifying “three theophanies” in the creation, each pointing to a separate person of the Trinity. ““The world did not know God through wisdom””, Robert writes, “even though there was something in the creatures themselves through which they could have known him. Thus, ‘the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not comprehended it’ (Jn. 1:5). There are, in creatures, three theophanies, which means, divine appearances: as in the world, whose magnitude demonstrates the great power of God, in which the Father is shown. The beauty, also, of the same world intimates the great wisdom who the Son is. Its utility, finally, shows the goodness of God, who the Holy

¹⁰ Haymo, *PL*117: 516.

¹¹ Gregory, *Mor.* 29.1; quoted by Gloss, col. 204; quoted partially by Hervé, *PL*181: 825.

Spirit is".¹² Unsurprisingly, no one followed such an enterprising reading of Paul's verse; instead, the remainder of our commentators understand the wisdom available through creatures in its more limited and traditional sense, as a potential, but always deficient, path toward knowledge of the almighty Creator of all things.

Hervé of Bourg-Dieu, around the same time as Robert and the Gloss, appears to refashion Haymo of Auxerre's interpretation along more traditional lines. Hervé comments, "'For since in the wisdom of God', that is, in the light of the divinity of the Son of God, 'the world,' that is, whoever is a lover of the world or an adherent of worldly wisdom through the proud wisdom of the age, 'did not know God,' since it was not able to discover the Creator by the cleverest investigation and numerous arguments by which it came to a search of the creation, therefore, 'it pleased God to save those who believe through the foolishness of preaching,' that is, by what was preached, which appears foolish, that is, by the incarnation and humiliation of his Son".¹³ Haymo's identification of 'the wisdom of God' with the Son and 'the world' with the Augustinian—and biblical (2 Tim. 4:10; 1 Jn. 2:15)—*amatores mundi*, lovers of the world, reappears here, now drawn into language regarding a rational investigation of the creation. Incidentally, Hervé also states that the world failed to 'discover' (*invenire*) the Creator by this investigation, a term only employed by one other commentator, Thomas Aquinas.

Aquinas' exegesis of 1 Cor. 1:21 is lengthy, but impressive for its simultaneous traditionalism and creativity. He reverts from Haymo's and Hervé's identification of the 'wisdom of God' as the divine Son to Chrysostom's and Sedulius' reading of it as a wisdom in the created order. The pedagogical nature of Chrysostom's ἐτέρω, God's change of action, is also particularly drawn out by the master of the sacred page. I quote in full:

'For it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching,' that is, by a preaching which human wisdom thinks foolish, 'to save those who believe.' And this, therefore, is because 'the world,' that is, the worldly, 'did not know God' by the wisdom acquired from the things of the world, and this 'in the wisdom of God.' For creating the world in divine wisdom, God built her judgments into the things of the world, as it says in Sirach 1:9, 'He poured her out upon all his works,' so that the creatures themselves, made through the wisdom of God, stand facing the wisdom of God, whose judgments they bear, as a person's words stand facing his wisdom

¹² Robert of Melun, *Qu. ep. Pauli*, p.177. On twelfth-century controversy around this way of identifying the Trinity, see David E. Luscombe, *The School of Peter Abelard: The Influence of Abelard's Thought in the Early Scholastic Period* (Cambridge: CUP, 1969; repr. 2008), pp.284-90.

¹³ Hervé, *PL*181: 825.

which they signify. And just as a student attains the knowledge of the teacher's wisdom through the words which she hears from him, so a person was able to attain the knowledge of God's wisdom through considering the creatures made by him. As it says in Rom. 1:20, 'The invisible things of God are understood through perceiving what has been made.' But humanity wandered from the right path of divine knowledge because of the vanity of their hearts. For this reason, it says in Jn. 1:10, 'He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and yet the world did not know him.' And therefore, God led the faithful to saving knowledge of him through other things which are not discovered in the ideas of creatures themselves. For this reason, these other things were considered foolish by worldly people, who only consider the ideas of human things. And these other such things are the teachings of faith. To draw a parallel, it is like a teacher who, seeing that his meaning was not grasped by his hearers through the words he spoke, sought to use other words through which he could clarify what he had in his heart.¹⁴

In this substantial commentary on Paul's statement, Aquinas masterfully draws together themes from previous exegeses of the verse: the wisdom of God 'built' (or 'instructed,' *instruit*) 'into' creatures; a human wisdom available *ex rebus mundi*, 'from the things of the world,' which is an indication of the divine wisdom;¹⁵ the failure of humanity to attain this wisdom because of a moral-spiritual defect (the 'vanity of their hearts'); and thus, God's decision to teach them 'through other things' not 'discovered' (*inveniuntur*) in creatures. What is new is the thoroughgoingness with which Aquinas draws out the pedagogical implications of this exegesis. God's fabrication of the world is an act of 'instructing' it in divine wisdom; creatures are thus like God's 'words' to us in the same way as a teacher's words to her students; and when, finally, this teaching goes unheeded, God adjusts his method and uses the 'teachings of faith' as 'other words' through which to communicate his meaning. For Theophylact, humanity had the wisdom of God in creation as a teacher, but for Aquinas, God the teacher built his wisdom into the creation. The whole work of God, from creation to providence to salvation, is perceived by Aquinas as an intricate programme of the divine pedagogy; the entire οἰκονομία of God's activity from creation to Christ is teaching. It is within the new phase of this programme, Aquinas will argue, that God employ teachers to supply the wisdom that is lacking to his people.

¹⁴ Aquinas, *In I Cor.* 1.3.55.

¹⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 3.3.179.

Catholic Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 1:21 After Aquinas

About a quarter century after Aquinas' lectures (c.1271-73), Peter of John Olivi (1248-1298) began a commentary on 1 Corinthians, cut short by his death.¹⁶ Olivi's comments are notable both for their account of wisdom, as well as for their close attention to why it might have 'pleased God' to act in this way. Like Aquinas, he is also concerned with a 'saving' knowledge of God. Olivi writes, "The wisdom of the world cannot bring one through to a sound knowledge of God, but the wisdom of the cross, which because of its excess and its contrariness to the first seems foolish to humanity, brings one wholly through to the saving knowledge and glory of God, and this claim is set out as the cause of the first wisdom's rejection and the second's election". The sharpness of this antithesis is also interesting because of Olivi's identification of a third wisdom, one available through created things, but not to the worldly wise. He explains, "'For since the world,' that is, the worldly wise, 'did not know God through wisdom,' namely its worldly and natural wisdom, 'in the wisdom of God,' that is, through the wisely created works of God in which shimmers the wisdom of God, 'therefore it pleased God,' namely reasonably and fittingly, 'through the foolishness of preaching,' that is, by the preaching of Christ crucified, 'to save those who believe,' namely in Christ preached in this way". Olivi goes on, "One should note that to the wisdom of God, shimmering in the works of the first creation, is added the wisdom of the works of restoration.... But the faith of believers replaces natural or worldly wisdom".¹⁷ Thus, Olivi does not say, as many have before him, that the wisdom of God found in creation does not lead one to God, but rather that the 'wisdom of the cross' is added (*superponit*) to it; worldly wisdom, on the other hand, is replaced (*praeponit*) by faith. Whereas earlier commentators, including Aquinas, identified the wisdom of the world and the wisdom available through creation, Olivi separates them, raising the question of what role he sees for a wisdom *ex rebus mundi* in God's plan to lead humanity to saving knowledge of him: for him, it is neither deficient nor saving.

Where Olivi perhaps has more to contribute is in his illuminating consideration of why it may have 'pleased God' to lead humanity to himself in this way, 'through the

¹⁶ So the editors of Olivi, *Postil.*, p.349.

¹⁷ Olivi, *Postil.*, p.357.

foolishness of preaching.’ Earlier he noted generally that God acted ‘reasonably and fittingly,’ but Olivi provides more detail. His reflections are worth quoting at length:

It could be objected that it would have been more honourable to God, as it seems, and more appropriate for our natural reason if God had increased for himself the [natural] light alone, because with this light God would be fully known and worshipped by means of his works, and so one would be saved through the wisdom of God, and he would not have had to add the apparent foolishness of the cross. The response to this is that out of all the things we examine, the human race ought not, after sin, to obtain such a light except by faith and the grace of redemption. Further, if this light were not founded in a faith humbling and taking captive the understanding and affections for God, it would not be sufficient to know and worship God savingly. But such a captivity seems foolish to the wise of the world and is contrary to their proud and empty wisdom. Moreover, it is more perfect to go unto God with Christ the head and by a cruciform life and death similar to his life and death than by the forementioned light alone, and therefore, as more perfect, ‘it pleased God.’¹⁸

The way in which God chose to teach humanity efficaciously, this ‘other way,’ is on Olivi’s view ‘more perfect’ than if God had simply enabled the human race to come to him by its natural light of reason. The decisive factor is that in our situation *post peccatum*, we ‘ought not’ to come to God by our natural powers—Olivi pointedly does not say cannot, but ‘ought not’—because we need to be rid of our ‘proud and empty wisdom’ and receive instead a faith that humbles us and seizes hold of all our faculties, our understanding and affections. These are the kind of students we need to be. Still more, by leading us to him through following his incarnate, crucified and risen Son, God teaches us to direct our whole lives in the shape of Christ become wisdom for us. This is a much ‘more perfect’ way, and as such, it ‘pleased God’ to enact his divine pedagogy through incarnation and the response of humbling faith rather than increasing our natural powers.

A few decades later, the Franciscan master Nicholas of Lyra (c.1270-1349) wrote his *Postilla* on the whole Bible (1322-31). While strikingly dependent on Aquinas’ exegesis, here and elsewhere, he does add a twist. The teachings of faith, Nicholas argues, are more rational than those the philosophers perceive in the ‘mirror of creatures.’ He writes, “‘For since, in the wisdom of God,’ that is, through the knowledge of creatures which are a kind of mirror of God. ‘The world did not know,’ that is, the wise of the world. ‘Through wisdom,’ namely worldly wisdom. ‘God,’ to knowledge of whom

¹⁸ Ibid., p.358.

the mirror of creatures leads, as it says in Rom. 1:21, 'For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God....'". Nicholas takes up the metaphor of the *speculum*, the 'mirror,' common to medieval theology and spirituality, and applies it to the traditional account of wisdom embedded in the creation. God made the world as a mirror in which humanity should have been able to perceive its maker, but, in fact, they did not. Nicholas continues, "'It pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe,' that is, by another means than the wisdom of philosophers, namely, through the preaching of the cross, which philosophers considered foolish due to a failure of their understanding. For it is much more reasonable to believe in a position established by the reviving of a dead person or anything of this kind, of which it is certain that it cannot occur except by God's doing, who cannot be the witness or guarantor of something false, than in any conclusion approved by human reason, which is able to fail". Here Nicholas offers an account quite different from, and in many ways opposed to, that of Olivi. Rather than arguing that this 'another means' was contrary to reason, the work of Christ is in fact its fulfillment; it is *rationibilibus*, 'more rational.' (Nicholas' mention, however, of the resurrection, rather than the cross, provides him this key.¹⁹) In any case, this *aliud modum*, this 'another means,' shows up God's kindness as a teacher. In language reminiscent of Aquinas, he concludes, "For in this, he acts as a benevolent teacher who, seeing that his learners had not grasped the truth established by him in one way, proceeded to another".²⁰ Nicholas' reading of the passage would carry through the later middle ages,²¹ and perhaps had an interesting effect on another well-known interpreter of Aquinas, Cardinal Cajetan.

Cajetan, like Nicholas of Lyra, considers 'the world' and 'its wisdom' to refer primarily to philosophers and their teachings drawn from God's radiant wisdom built into the creation, but develops this to mean that both the method and the material of philosophy are deficient when it comes to divine realities. Philosophical method is deficient, because it proceeds by demonstrative reason, while preaching proceeds by narrative; and philosophical material is deficient, because it considers the wisdom of God diffused in the order of the universe, and the cross of Christ has no place in that order.

¹⁹ Cf. Cardinal Cajetan, n. 23 below: "But the cross is without reason...".

²⁰ Nicholas of Lyra, col. 203.

²¹ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm*, fol. 38r.

Cajetan begins, “‘In the wisdom of God,’ by which namely God with such and so great an order created and governs the world, and which participates in the order of things as craft is radiant in craftwork. This is the material of all philosophy. For the reasons of things are rays of the divine wisdom”. True philosophy examines these by the natural light of reason to come to truth about the world. Yet this light was not sufficient to bring humanity to its destiny in God because they were waylaid by their unrighteousness. Thus, “‘It pleased God through the foolishness of preaching.’ The gospel proclamation, although it is not foolish in itself, nevertheless Paul calls it such in comparison with philosophical teaching” both with regard to its method (narrative rather than demonstration)²² and with regard to its material (the cross rather than the created order): “The material of philosophy is the divine wisdom diffused in the universe of things, in relation to which the cross has a reason of foolishness. For the wisdom of God, spread throughout the universe, shimmers in reasons. But the cross is without reason in the order of things”. While each is difficult to translate consistently for Cajetan’s *ratio*, replacing ‘reason’ with ‘logic’ in this passage also gets at something of the Dominican exegete’s meaning. The wisdom of God shimmers in the various logics of the world he has made, but the cross has no place in that system—it has no logic, and thus is inaccessible to demonstrative reason. This is fitting because the philosophers made improper use of the divine wisdom written into the logic of the created order due to their sinfulness. So Cajetan concludes, “And justly, on account of the fact that wisdom was disregarded by the world both as material and as method, ‘it pleased God’ to choose the foolishness of preaching as much with regard to material as to method”.²³ Thus, while for Olivi, this ‘other way’ was more perfect because it opened the doors to the humility of faith and a Christ-shaped life, and for Nicholas of Lyra more rational because more epistemically trustworthy, for Cajetan this new way of God’s teaching is more just, because the world deserved this overturning of its reason-derived philosophies.

For Cajetan’s fellow Dominican Catharinus, this ‘new way of God’ is adapted as a ‘cure for our weakness’ to turn the ‘infamous sins of humanity into health and life.’ Thus,

²² Cf. Michael O’Connor, “Cajetan on Paul,” in *A Companion to Paul in the Reformation*, ed., R. Ward Holder (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp.337-62, at p.353: “Indeed, Cajetan seems to interpret Paul’s misgivings about philosophy as primarily methodological.” Rather, both methodological and material. O’Connor cites the passage on 1 Cor. 1:21, but leaves out Cajetan’s treatment of the respective materials of philosophy and preaching.

²³ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 41v-42r.

God's new way of teaching us, and our new way of learning, acts as a kind of medicine measured to our need, a metaphor common in the patristic and medieval periods, and present in Sedulius' exegesis of 1 Cor. 1:21.²⁴ According to Catharinus, what Paul calls the wisdom of God and the foolishness of God "are both useful ways for searching after God himself. There is the wisdom of God, by which he is known in the creation of things and creatures, which consist in number, weight and measure", an allusion to Wisdom 11:20. Contemplating the heavens and their stars, we "prove them to be all wisely disposed there", another allusion to Wisdom, now 8:1. "Yet the philosophers made no progress in this wisdom with God, for although knowing him, they did not glorify him as he was due", as Paul writes in Rom. 1, a portion of Scripture also cited by Aquinas, Nicholas of Lyra and Denis the Carthusian. Catharinus continues, "God, then, seeing that humanity perceived nothing of use through this wisdom, changed his plan of teaching and, made foolish for us, gave us a new method of learning, that is to say, that through his foolishness by which his Son was flung onto the cross, we would know his measureless power and wisdom and goodness and so make progress along the new way of God". All God's foolishness, including "becoming an infant and, as it is written, keeping silent like a lamb", he "turned into a cure for our weakness", making the "infamous sins of humanity into health and life".²⁵ Thus, God saw that we were making no 'use' of the wisdom he implanted in creation, and like a good teacher adapted his lessons to our level, meeting our foolishness with his, and made a 'new way' on which we could advance toward him.

Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 1:21 Among the Reformers

By this point in the Reformation, this pedagogical reading of 1 Cor. 1:21, which was begun with Chrysostom and developed by Sedulius, Hervé, Aquinas and Lyra, was firmly established. Reformed commentators, as a general rule, maintain many of the classical readings whereas Lutheran exegesis, especially in its early years, tends to be more radical. The comments of Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) and Johann Bugenhagen (1485-1558) serve as a case in point. Rather than seeing the creation as imbued with the bright light of the divine wisdom, the observation of the creation, for Melanchthon and Bugenhagen, only yields a dark vision of God's terrifying power. The world's wisdom "designates every

²⁴ Cf. n. 9 above.

²⁵ Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.146.

judgment which conceives of God by human capacities themselves without the Spirit, by which judgment, the longer God is sought, that much less is he found, the more properly his power is esteemed from creatures, the more horrifying he appears. Prov. 25:27 (Vulg.), ‘He who is an inquirer of majesty,’ etc. For in this kind of natural investigation nothing is found but greatness and power. His goodness is not grasped”.²⁶ Bugenhagen quotes the same verse in a different edition (“He who inquires after great things is oppressed by them”), then continues: “[F]inally nothing else is found than either no god or a terrible god, so far is it from being that his goodness may be found so that one may approach. And so, this wisdom recedes further and flees from God”.²⁷

Rather than this darkness being a feature of a human moral and spiritual failing to see the beautiful wisdom of God in the world, this horrifying and deteriorating image of God seems almost to be a function of the creation itself: ‘the longer’ one looks in the creation, ‘that much less’ does one find God, for Melanchthon; ‘the more properly’ one perceives it, ‘the more horrifying’ God’s power appears. One could read the Lutherans more in line with the tradition here by emphasizing that this is the judgment of one ‘without the Spirit,’ the one who, in Bugenhagen’s phrase, culpably “wants to be most wise in divine things”;²⁸ yet Melanchthon’s point is that God’s goodness can never be seen in the creation, not only *de facto*, as in the tradition, but now, it seems, *de jure*. In this regard, their reliance on a single verse from Proverbs, rather than John 1, Romans 1 or Wisdom 8, is not inconsequential. God’s wisdom, for the Lutherans, is only present in the foolish figure of the crucified Christ.²⁹

With Erasmus, on the other hand, and the numerous Reformed commentators who follow him, we find a fertile reproduction of the classical interpretation. The two key elements of Chrysostom’s exegesis, namely, the knowledge of God ἀναλόγως and God’s decision to teach us ἐτέρως, reappear with absolute clarity. This is Erasmus’ paraphrase of 1 Cor. 1:21:

²⁶ Melanchthon, *Annot.*, fol. 81r.

²⁷ Bugenhagen, *Comm.*, fol. Cr; cf. fol. D5r-[D6]r.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Maior, writing much later (1561) than Melanchthon (1522) or Bugenhagen (1530), draws more traditional conclusions by linking the passage to Romans 1 (*En. prim. ad. Cor.*, fol. 19v). Melanchthon did write a second commentary on 1 Corinthians, but it deals with chapters 1-4 only cursorily, and 1:21 not at all: *Brevis et utilis commentarius in priorem epistolam Pauli ad Corinthios & in aliquot capita secundae* (Wittenberg, 1561), fol. Br-[B8]r.

God had declared his wisdom before through this most beautiful spectacle of the world, created in the highest reason in order that, out of admiration for his works, humanity would be seized with love for its maker. Yet, on account of their vice, the matter ended differently. Created things were admired and venerated, but they despised the author as unknown, and so they lived as if God either favoured vice or he who created was not the same as he who governs. Thus, he approached the same matter by a different way. Seeing that those to whom wisdom was announced through created things finished in a worse state, God restored them by the preaching of something which seems foolish and humble to mortals, in order that those who philosophize, who used to worship silent stones and now believe, would acquire true salvation by the cross of Christ, and now distrusting the guard of human philosophy, would by faith have faith in the divine goodness. For neither would there be hope of salvation unless there was understanding from which one ought to hope for salvation. Trust in God, then, was in the first place to be brought to all, not only to Jews but even to Gentiles.³⁰

Erasmus' account of the wisdom inscribed upon the created world is reminiscent especially of Nicholas of Lyra. Nicholas, for instance, refers to the world as a 'mirror' (*speculum*), and Erasmus as a 'spectacle' (*spectaculum*, also 'theatre'). In contrast to Aquinas' view of created realities as the 'words' of God, these two visual metaphors, *speculum* and *spectaculum*, evoke the observation or contemplation of the creation as the usual means by which humanity could have come to knowledge of God. Humanity ought to have risen from 'admiration' of this rational order ἀναλόγως to the maker of this reality, but because of vice, as Olivi so incisively analyzed, this road to God was blocked. Instead, God had to instruct humanity ἐτέρως, by a different way. But in place of Nicholas of Lyra's 'more rational' account of the proclamation of this other way of God, Erasmus introduces a new and familiar Reformation-era emphasis: the faith—Erasmus uses both *fides* and *fiducia*—by which one comes to an understanding (*intellectus*) of the God who brings salvation to the human race.

Erasmus established both the interpretive framework and the language in which 1 Cor. 1:21 would be seen in the Reformation. Heinrich Bullinger, writing some fifteen years after the first edition of Erasmus' paraphrases in 1519, borrows and elaborates on Erasmus' *spectaculum mundi*.³¹ "God", Bullinger writes, "fashioned this whole world with the ornamentation of his majesty—for which reason the Greeks adapted the term κόσμον

³⁰ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, 862; quoted by Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.184.

³¹ Bullinger also uses Erasmus' biblical text, on which see Timothy J. Wengert, *Philip Melancthon's Annotationes in Johannem In Relation to its Predecessors and Contemporaries* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1987), p.219.

[related to κοσμεῖν, 'to order' or 'to adorn'] to the world—in order that all nations, educated through this most beautiful theatre, might know and call on God. For so sings the prophet, 'The heavens tell of the glory of God, and the firmament declares the work of his hands' (Ps. 19:1)". Again, although the Philosophers held onto some notion of God, their searching of the creation eventually ceased. "For they either did not know God from his work and the nature of things and his wondrous governance, admiring the created things, or knowing him rightly they did not worship him, seeking their own praise rather than that of the mysterious, as the apostle explains at length in Rom. 1". Seeing that humanity's sin was impeding his intentions, God, "led by his native goodness", "adapted himself to the capacity of mortals" and "approached this matter by a different route".³² While Bullinger's use of Erasmus here is obvious, he is by no means the only Reformer to do so, nor should he be accused of uncreativity: no less than the renowned exegete John Calvin is conspicuously dependent on him.

While Erasmus is certainly the proximate source for Calvin's reading of the passage, his interpretation also bears affinities to Peter John of Olivi and, to a lesser degree, Nicholas of Lyra. Like Nicholas, Calvin deploys the image of creation as a 'mirror' of the divine wisdom, though he also uses Erasmus' 'spectacle'; like Olivi, Calvin attends to what use could have been made of our natural powers before sin, but what, *post peccatum*, is required of our educational path to bring us by a right way to a sound knowledge of God. For Olivi, we first need to be disabused of our 'proud and empty wisdom' by having our hearts cleansed and our minds made teachable by the presence of a new, humbling faith. Calvin, similarly, will write that depravity requires that we first become fools in order to overcome our moral and spiritual failings, our ignorance, contempt, negligence and thanklessness. Calvin writes:

Here certainly was the legitimate order, that a human being, having contemplated the wisdom of God in his works with the inborn light natural to oneself, would attain knowledge of him. But because of human depravity, here the order is overturned, such that God first wants us to become foolish in ourselves before instructing us for salvation. Then, in place of a model of his wisdom, he offers us a certain simulacrum of foolishness. And this overturning is well deserved because of human thanklessness. Paul calls the fabrication of the whole world the wisdom of God, which is a luminous model and brilliant demonstration of his wisdom. Therefore, God proffers to us in creatures a most clear mirror of his wondrous

³² Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 15v-16r.

wisdom, in order that whoever looks upon the world and the other works of God must of necessity, if one has even a speck of sound judgment, to burst out in admiration of him. If people were led by looking on the works of God to true knowledge of him, they would have known God wisely, or by their natural and own way of wise thinking, but because this instruction brought no benefit to the whole world, that God laid open his wisdom in creatures, he then approached teaching humanity by another way. So it is to be imputed to our vice that we do not achieve a saving knowledge of God before we are emptied of our own sense.... This is a most beautiful verse showing how great the blindness of the human mind is, which can make out nothing in the midst of light. For it is true that the world is now the image of a theatre in which God presents to us a striking figure of his glory, but we, while such a spectacle lays open before our eyes, are blind, not because the revelation is shrouded but because we are alienated in our minds (cf. Col. 1:21)—nor is it only our will, but also our faculties that fail us in this. For as much as God is openly appearing, we nevertheless cannot otherwise look on him than with the eyes of faith, except that we manage a faint taste of divinity which renders us inexcusable. Therefore, because Paul here denies that God is known from creatures, you should understand that one does not apprehend a pure knowledge of him. For in order to take away from everyone the pretext of ignorance, people make progress in the school of universal nature just far enough that they are touched with a certain sense of divinity, but what kind of God he is they do not know, and instead soon fade away into their thoughts: so “the light shines in the darkness” (Jn. 1:5). Therefore, it follows that people thus err not by sheer ignorance, but also by contempt and negligence of reality and thanklessness for it.³³

Calvin, like Olivi, speaks of the natural light of the human mind, and even of the way things could have been apart from sin, the ‘legitimate order’ of coming to know God by means of God’s wisdom ‘laid open’ in his creatures. This is Chrysostom’s ἀναλόγως. But because we live in the time ‘after sin’ (Olivi) or ‘vice’ (Erasmus), this path becomes almost entirely useless; it allows us to obtain only a ‘faint taste’ or a ‘certain sense’ of ‘divinity,’ but tells us nothing about *qualis sit Deus*, about ‘what kind of God he is.’ This is not only the result of a volitional failing on our part, which Calvin identifies as contempt and negligence of God’s wisdom in creation and thanklessness for it, but also of an intellectual failing, ignorance: it is not ‘only our will, but also our faculties that fail us in this.’ We are slothful creatures, ungrateful and unaroused by the immense and captivating beauty of God’s ‘luminous’ and ‘brilliant’ show of his ‘wonderful wisdom.’ At this point, we can see that, quite unlike Melanchthon, who believes creation only emits an increasingly terrible darkness, for Calvin, humanity lives *in media luce*, ‘in the midst of light.’ The whole creation is a ‘mirror,’ a ‘spectacle,’ a ‘theatre’ of God’s shimmering glory. The light shines

³³ Calvin, CO49: 326-27.

in the darkness, and we did not comprehend it until we first became foolish and small in our own eyes, in order to become rightly wise with God's wisdom, the foolish simulacrum of the cross. Though we dwell in the midst of light, we needed to undergo a moral and spiritual transformation before we could perceive it. This is a transformation that another Reformer, Peter Martyr Vermigli, especially highlights.

Calvin published his commentary in 1546; two years later, Vermigli lectured on 1 Corinthians in Oxford, and in 1551, these were published in reworked form.³⁴ Not surprisingly, then, Vermigli's comments are dependent on those of Calvin. 'In the wisdom of God' is taken to mean "in the making of the world, and in the most beautiful creatures, through whom the wisdom of God shows herself", echoing Erasmus' 'most beautiful spectacle.' But because this only provides a "faint and weak" knowledge of God (Calvin's 'faint taste'), only able "to render people inexcusable" (Rom. 1:20, also alluded to by Calvin), the divine mercy intervened and undid "so great a failing of humanity" and "approached by another way". In this new way of God, he "proposes, on the contrary, a simulacrum of extreme foolishness, Christ crucified" (Calvin, too, calls the cross a 'simulacrum of foolishness'). Yet beyond these common themes, Vermigli does offer a different perspective on the reason for God's change of pedagogical method. While Calvin's view is closer to one element of Olivi's reading, in which the natural light of reason is no longer viable because of the corruption of our faculties by sin, Vermigli's interpretation is closer to another, in which it is 'more perfect,' according to Olivi, for us to receive a faith which captures our affections for God. For Vermigli, the first, 'faint,' kind of knowledge of God, which only renders us inexcusable, "does, of course, bring us a bit of light, but not enough to change the heart. There is another [kind of knowledge] which is possessed by faith, and depends on the word of God and divine revelation. And this, which is only in those reborn through Christ, is effective to such a degree that it changes souls, and makes us partakers of the divine nature (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4). The Lord called this eternal life when he said in that place, that we may know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he sent (cf. Jn. 17:3)".³⁵ In choosing how to go about teaching us, God decided on a method that would involve changing (*transmutet*) our souls, transforming

³⁴ Jon Balserak, "1 Corinthians Commentary: Exegetical Tradition," in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, eds. Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi and Frank A. James III (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp.283-304 at pp.288-89.

³⁵ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 23v-24r.

them through a special kind of knowledge, one granted not through God's 'most beautiful creatures,' but through the hideous and 'extremely foolish' spectacle of the cross, viewed with the eyes of faith. Thus, we cannot be students of theology before we have undergone such a transmutation, a spiritual and perceptual rebirth.

Musculus' Improvement of the Tradition

In the final Reformed thinker from this period, Musculus, who published his commentary on 1 Corinthians in 1559, many of the by now familiar themes make their appearance: Nicholas of Lyra's emphasis on the absolute certainty of God's truth as opposed to human speculations; the wisdom of God as the whole beautiful order of creation, which as Bullinger reminded us, is implied by the Greek term κόσμος; and the whole tradition's 'other way' of saving humanity after our failings made the first null and void.³⁶ What are more interesting in Musculus' commentary, and in many ways a necessary conclusion to the considerations of this chapter, are his two *quaestiones* on this verse. In the first, Musculus borrows from Vermigli's examination of the seeming contradiction between 1 Corinthians and Romans. How, he asks, can the apostle say that the world did not know God 'in the wisdom of God' in 1 Cor. 1, when "the very same apostle" says in Rom. 1 that the wise knew the invisible God through his visible works? Musculus answers by taking up Vermigli's account of the "twofold knowledge of God": in Rom. 1, Paul is talking about the 'faint' knowledge of divinity, which is true knowledge, but deficient because not salvific; in 1 Cor. 1, on the other hand, the same apostle is talking about the saving knowledge of God, which the world could not attain 'in the wisdom of God,' that is, by the observation of the creation, but only in the foolishness of preaching. Considering the significance of Rom. 1 for the history of exegesis (and theology), it is fitting that Vermigli and Musculus offer at last what is after all only an elucidation of the tradition's reading of this passage.³⁷

In Musculus' second *quaestio*, he asks something a more attentive reader may have noticed: How can God be said to decide upon this course of action now, initiating a programme of foolish preaching, when elsewhere the apostle says in Eph. 1 that "the mystery of this decision was hidden from eternity in Christ Jesus, and the elect were

³⁶ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 38-39.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, *quaestio* i, col. 40.

predestined before the foundation of the world to life in Christ”.³⁸ Of course, Musculus answers, Scripture is speaking of God here *humano more*, in a human manner, as it does in many places. When the gospel first appeared, it was seen that the plan of salvation had changed, and so it was said that God made this decision. In reality, however, God had purposed this from eternity, which we see not only in Eph. 1 but also in 1 Cor. 2:7, “the wisdom of God hidden in a mystery, which God predestined before the ages for our glory.” In his comments on that verse, Musculus writes, “In order that you would not think that, where God saw himself unrecognized by the world through its wisdom this means that the Father then finally thought up this wisdom about the cross of Christ, what is said here forbids it, about how God predetermined it before the ages”.³⁹ Thus, in 1 Cor. 1:21, where God makes a choice to change his method of teaching, to teach ἐτέρω, Paul is speaking “according to an idea of time” in which things begin to appear, rather than “according to the utterly hidden abyss of God’s decisions, in which the principle of this decision lays undisclosed”.⁴⁰ While then, the tradition has consistently portrayed God as a wise teacher, adjusting and accommodating his method to the level of his morally and intellectually deficient students, in reality from before the creation of the world God has intended, in his mysterious counsel, for his Son to become wisdom for us by taking on human existence, before the making of all things as a shimmering spectacle of his infinite wisdom.

Conclusion

In the comments of Gregorio Primaticci (1490-1578) on 1 Cor. 3:21, “all things are yours,” including the world and life and death, the Dominican teacher unearths a theological truth running through the whole commentary tradition on 1 Cor. 1:21. “For all the things that are, ‘are yours’”, Primaticci writes, “that is, are granted to you for your benefit and servitude, and clearly the world is ours if we suppose its course to be not by chance or fortune, but by God’s arrangement”.⁴¹ God our teacher oversees history, and God has, in fact, directed and even intervened in history in order to accomplish his unwavering intention of teaching humanity to know him, and so to find their destiny in him. God

³⁸ Ibid., *quaestio* ii, col. 40.

³⁹ Ibid., col. 59.

⁴⁰ Ibid., *quaestio* ii, col. 40.

⁴¹ Primaticci, *Lit. exp. ep. Pauli*, fol. 88v.

made this wondrous theatre for the great drama of our existence as a species, a theatre crafted in the divine wisdom with which it shines—we live, as Calvin says, ‘in the midst of light’, or, as Aquinas perceives, created things are God’s words to us and come bearing the judgments of divine wisdom; when, however, we failed to understand these words, God acted as a kind teacher and used other, saving words ‘through which he could clarify what he had in his heart.’

Theologians live in the time after God has spoken these new saving words to us in his Word become flesh. This determines the kind of wisdom one is to seek in theology, as well as the kinds to be avoided. The wisdom theologians teach is found in the Son of God, eternal wisdom become wisdom for us, as he is witnessed to in the text of the Old and New Testaments. This wisdom exceeds the shadow of Israel’s law and overturns the natural reason of the nations. Beginning with these latter as a foundation ensures the cross of Christ can only look like madness or an impossibility; on the other hand, making a humble beginning with faith in this crucified One as the true wisdom of God allows us to know, by the Spirit’s light, him for whom we were made.

Chapter Three | **Wisdom, Divine and Human**

“For all the wisdom of the faithful is enclosed in the cross of Christ.”

— John Calvin

“In Christ Jesus, as Col. 2:3 says, ‘are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,’
...which nevertheless the apostle did not announce to them, but only those things which were clearer
and more basic in Christ Jesus. And so he adds, ‘and him crucified.’”

— Thomas Aquinas

Before treating the character of the human actors in the economy of God’s pedagogy through history, the students and the teachers of theology in and through whom God is at work as a teacher, one must first treat the character of the material which is to be taught. For, as we have begun to see, the divine wisdom is very different than any human branch of learning, and just as different human arts and sciences make their own demands on their students, so too, to an even greater degree, does the knowledge of God. When a teacher brings her students to approach a created object, such as a plant or a city or a formula or a text, certain intellectual abilities are required, but also certain moral powers—patience, for instance, or concern or a lack of greed—and these vary depending on the object under study. When it comes to the study of God, beyond the requisite intellectual and moral powers there are also spiritual qualities that are demanded, qualities which only God our teacher may supply. But before examining these qualities (in the next three chapters), we must first come to see just how the divine wisdom differs from human wisdom.

Searching For a New Method

In 1 Cor. 1:17b, the apostle Paul states that he was not sent to preach the gospel “in a wisdom of words (ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου).” The gospel is a different kind of wisdom and cannot rely on any human eloquence or rhetoric; it needs its own method. Aquinas explains: “Even in the branches of human knowledge, the same method is not appropriate for every branch”. Before landing, then, on the method he or she will use to teach the subject, and the intellectual and moral (and perhaps spiritual) qualities this method will demand, a teacher needs to determine what is to be taught. For, Aquinas continues, “any method of teaching is most inappropriate for a subject when, by means of such a method, that which is most important in that subject is undone”. And “what is most important in

the teaching of Christian faith is the salvation accomplished by the cross of Christ”.¹ In the teaching of theology, then, one needs a way of approach to this object of study that does not obfuscate the material, but rather illuminates it. Since the saving cross of Christ is the central matter in theology, the character of this reality is determinative of the kind of method of teaching and learning required.

Calvin, commenting on the same verse of Paul’s letter, comes to similar conclusions. “For all the wisdom of the faithful”, he writes, “is enclosed in the cross of Christ”. The cross is the very centre of God’s wisdom and virtually contains the whole. Thus, the nature of this reality will determine how it must be approached in order for it to be properly understood. “But what”, Calvin continues, “is more contemptible than a cross? Therefore, for whoever wishes to think wisely of God, it is necessary that they descend to this humility of the cross, and this, further, does not happen without one first renouncing both one’s own understanding and all the wisdom of the world. Indeed, Paul here relates not only of what sort are Christ’s disciples, and which path of learning it is appropriate for them to hold to, but also what is the course of teaching in the school of Christ”.² Because the cross of Christ is central, what is most important, in the divine wisdom, its lowliness and paradoxical character exacts a corresponding humility from those who come to understand it. Whoever comes to Christ’s cross in pride and presumption rather than the requisite humility, filled with their own so-called understanding and not awaiting God’s, is not being truly ‘objective,’ but suffers a moral fault which results in the intellectual failure of misunderstanding.³ Thus, in the contemptibility of the cross Paul shows us what sort of method of teaching and learning, and what corresponding moral and spiritual virtues, are appropriate to the study of theology, the divine wisdom. But Calvin also importantly emphasizes the need to ‘renounce’ in ‘humility’ all our human understanding, so that we can grasp God’s teaching. As we will see in some detail below, the divine wisdom bears very different qualities than every kind of human knowledge.

¹ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.3.45.

² Calvin, CO49: 320.

³ See chapter four, “Obstacles to Spiritual Understanding.”

The Divine Wisdom Found in Scripture

Functionally, we meet the divine wisdom in Scripture. Paul writes that the Corinthians “have been enriched in all things in Christ, in all speech (λόγῳ) and in all knowledge” (1 Cor. 1:5), and many patristic and medieval commentators see this twofold gift reflected in the twofold canon of Old and New Testaments. Cassiodorus (c.485-c.585), for instance, explains Paul’s meaning this way: “‘in all’ teachings by the gift of God through wisdom, which ‘makes prophets and friends of God’ (Wis. 7:27). ‘In all speech and in all knowledge,’ as much of the Old Testament as of the New”.⁴ Haymo of Auxerre, a few centuries later, expands on the same text similarly: “‘in all’ wisdom and ‘knowledge,’ or in an understanding of the Old and New Testament”.⁵ The Gloss, at the beginning of the twelfth century, says more simply, “in an understanding of the Scriptures”,⁶ which Aquinas expands to mean “in the understanding of all the Scriptures, and universally of all those things which relate to salvation”.⁷ The wisdom we seek in Scripture is a saving wisdom; it is the knowledge of all the ways and works of God that bring us to salvation.

Hugh of St. Cher identifies these gifts with what Paul speaks of in 1 Cor. 2:7, “the wisdom of God hidden in a mystery”: “that is, in the holy secret of God, which is in the New and Old Testament”.⁸ This wisdom, the Gloss suggests, is found “in expositing the mysteries of the Old Testament in which Christ was signified, as in the offering of Abel or Abraham. According to [pseudo-]Jerome, ‘It is what is contained in the gospel: the nativity of Christ, his passion, etc.’”.⁹ All of Scripture finds its centre in Christ and bears witness to him and his redemptive work; one comes to an understanding of the Scriptures by having eyes to see where and how Christ is its meaning. This is why Konrad Pellikan (1478-1556) calls this hidden wisdom “the mystical wisdom about Christ contained in the Scriptures”.¹⁰ This forms the centre, the single σκοπός or object of Scripture’s vision. Thus, Bullinger can argue against those who think Scripture is a collection of “dissolute objects”: “For you yourself see that no argument, no sentence, no phrase, not even a single word rashly differs from our Paul. All things rightly hang together, and each is

⁴ Cassiodorus, *PL*68: 507.

⁵ Haymo, *PL*117: 510.

⁶ Interlinear Gloss, col. 197-98.

⁷ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.1.13; quoted in Nicholas of Lyra, col. 197; cf. Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 36v.

⁸ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, ad. litt., fol. 77r.

⁹ Gloss, col. 209, quoting ps.-Jerome, *PL*30: 722.

¹⁰ Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.188.

related to a stable object”.¹¹ Each part of Scripture in some way points to Christ, the saving wisdom hidden throughout the Old and New Testaments.

For this reason, Vermigli can say that Scripture is “an expression of the wisdom of God, breathed out by the Holy Spirit to pious human beings, and then recorded in histories and letters. Peter attests it to be breathed out by the Holy Spirit, by the same impulse, for our salvation and restoration, when he says, ‘For prophecy was not formerly brought by human will...’ (2 Pet. 1:21)”.¹² The Holy Spirit breathed out the Scriptures to the prophets and apostles, who wrote it down to aid us in coming to know how God saves us—for only God can save us. “So”, Vermigli continues, “to be held as the first principle from which all that is truly theological unfurls is this: ‘The Lord said’”.¹³ In the speech of God in and through Scripture, we meet our Saviour, Christ, who shares with us the divine wisdom, his mind (1 Cor. 2:16), by his Spirit.

The Qualities of Divine Wisdom

Coming to know this divine wisdom by discerning the presence of Christ in Scripture is, to recall the beginning of this chapter, very different from the way we come to any other kind of knowledge. It requires a different kind of teaching and a different kind of learning, because it requires a different method, one not solely dependent on human intellectual and moral powers, but needing the divine power of the Spirit. The wisdom that Christ is for us is a spiritual wisdom, which means that Christ is truly found in Scripture only where the Spirit enlightens the eyes of our hearts to receive a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him (cf. Eph. 1:17-18). This kind of knowledge, the subject of this science, is, in other words, determinative of the kind of study and students appropriate to it. Throughout the history of exegesis, commentators identified several characteristics that marked out the divine wisdom as unique. These include its eternity, its infinity, its mystery and especially its transcendence.

The adjective to most continuously appear in the commentary tradition as a descriptor of God’s wisdom is transcendent. The originator of this widespread understanding seems to be Haymo of Auxerre, in the Carolingian period, but his reading is

¹¹ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 38r-v.

¹² Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, *praefatio*, fol. 1r.

¹³ *Ibid.*, fol. 1v.

influenced by Paul's own language in 1 Corinthians. The apostle writes that God's foolishness is "wiser than human beings" (1:25), which Haymo takes to mean that "it transcends human wisdom" and "is wiser than every worldly wisdom".¹⁴ Haymo is only giving a name to something already present in Paul. Atto of Vercelli, in the following century, writes that "the divine wisdom transcends human knowledge in every way".¹⁵ God's wisdom climbs up above every human wisdom in every way; it is inaccessible to humanity apart from God. The Gloss on 'wiser' elaborates, "than human beings can either see or be".¹⁶

Thomas Aquinas in this connection cites Sirach 3:23 (Vulg. 3:25) some four times in his lectures on the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians: "More than you can understand has been shown you" (NRSV). At each citation, he makes reference to the divine wisdom, which "exceeds human reason", "transcends all wisdom", "exceeds human understanding" and is "above human reason and sense".¹⁷ God's wisdom is not naturally grasped by human beings; it is unavailable to the human faculties of reason, understanding and sense. Calvin, interestingly, adds two more. "This is such a wisdom", he writes, "as surpasses the whole intelligence of humanity by such a great interval that its palate is not able to grasp it".¹⁸ No human power is capable of the divine wisdom until the Spirit makes it so, not the intelligence and not even the 'palate,' the taste. It is "so high", according to Hugh of St. Cher, "that it exceeds every power of the demons and philosophers".¹⁹ Because of this, it looks like foolishness to them, but this is only an appearance; in reality, it is the true wisdom. As we saw before from Cajetan, "whatsoever and howsoever stupid or imprudent and without reason in the order of things, provided that it is of God, it is wiser than the people of the world".²⁰ This is, in Olivi's phrase, the "superexcessive height and depth of Christian wisdom".²¹

This inaccessible space in which the divine wisdom resides, its transcendent height, is paralleled by its enclosure and hiddenness from human eyes, its mysterious

¹⁴ Haymo, *PL*117: 517.

¹⁵ Atto of Vercelli, *PL*134: 307.

¹⁶ Interlinear Gloss, cols. 205-206; quoted by Lombard, *PL*191: 1545.

¹⁷ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.3.42, 1.3.62, 2.1.86, 2.3.113.

¹⁸ Calvin, *CO*49: 344.

¹⁹ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, ad. litt., fol. 77r.

²⁰ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 42r. Cf. ch. 2, n. 23.

²¹ Olivi, *Postil.*, p.353.

depth. Hervé of Bourg-Dieu, commenting on 1 Cor. 2:7, “the wisdom of God hidden in a mystery,” argues that this means “in the secrecy of mysteries, because the eye of our reason cannot look at what is hidden in the heart of the Father without the labour of inquiry and the enlightening of the Holy Spirit, since ‘the Word was with God’ (Jn. 1:1)”.²² While Hervé focuses on the hiddenness of Christ’s eternal existence with the Father, Denis the Carthusian gives three interpretations of this ‘mystery,’ from which one may draw out some important conclusions. The mystery in which God’s wisdom is hidden, for Denis, can refer to: the mysteries of the Old Testament which foretell Christ; the “holy secret or sacrament of the incarnation teaching this wisdom ineffably incarnate, as it says, ‘The Word was made flesh’ (Jn. 1:14)”;²³ or the nature of our knowledge “under a certain hidden veil, ‘for we now see through a mirror in an enigma’ (1 Cor. 13:12)”.²³ Thus, as opposed to Hervé’s reading of this mysterious wisdom as the eternal Son ‘hidden in the heart of the Father,’ Denis gives three temporal interpretations, each progressively more revealed. In the first, we see the traditional reference to the foreshadowing of the old covenant; the second is the incarnation in which Christ becomes wisdom for us and yet remains a ‘holy secret’; and the third is the limitation of our knowledge of God in this age, before the time when knowledge will pass away and love be all in all (1 Cor. 13:8-13). This threefold exegesis, importantly, suggests something that Denis does not explicitly conclude: the revelation of God’s wisdom in Christ does not undo its mystery. It might be tempting to think that God’s revelation in prophecy or the incarnation introduces his wisdom within the confines of human reason or understanding, but as Denis’ third reading implies, what God shows us in Christ remains mysterious and still demands a spiritual understanding. The divine wisdom is no less transcendent for being shown us in Jesus.

Aquinas fully understands this permanent mysteriousness of the divine wisdom, as is clear from his comments on 1 Cor. 2:6-7. There, according to Thomas, Paul “first describes it with regard to its matter and authority when he says, ‘but we speak the wisdom of God,’ that is, which is God and is from God. For although all wisdom is from God, as Sir. 1:1 says, yet in a certain special way this wisdom, which is about God, is also from God by revelation.... Second, he shows its quality, saying ‘which is hidden in a

²² Hervé, *PL*181: 832.

²³ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 39r.

mystery,' for this wisdom is hidden from human beings, insofar as it exceeds human understanding, as it says in Sir. 3:23, 'More than you can understand has been shown you'.²⁴ Thus, this hidden wisdom is given to us by God in his revelation, but it simultaneously remains hidden in its transcendence of human cognitive powers. The hidden is revealed, but as revealed it remains hidden.

The apparent foolishness which is wiser than human beings, according to Sebastian Meyer, comprises "everything the Father does in Christ and through Christ".²⁵ It is precisely the cross of Christ, for Paul, which is the true wisdom of God while appearing foolish to the world. This is because, as Pellikan writes (here as elsewhere borrowing from Erasmus), "those things which were done by God through Christ were carried out and drawn out from the innermost secret counsels of the divine mind, and were not comprehended by human reasoning, but only indicated by the Spirit of God in the prophetic revelations".²⁶ The event of the incarnation, predestined in God's οἰκονομία from all eternity, was not immediately comprehensible by humanity. This was intentional on the part of God the teacher, who asks that we come to him in the humility gained by abandoning our own all-too-human understanding. Christ's actions were elected in the 'divine mind,' rather than any human one, and prophesied in the Old Testament. It was still necessary that God help humanity to understand what was taking place: "Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven" (Mt. 16:17). Thus, even the Scriptures of the Old Testament did not allow human *ratiocinationes* to draw a clear line to the person of Jesus. For, as Cajetan points out, "Paul confesses himself to know this wisdom, not out of the teaching of the law under Gamaliel, but through the Holy Spirit poured into him".²⁷ This wisdom, once again, requires an understanding given by the Spirit through faith; that is what this material asks of those who would learn it.

In addition to the transcendence and mysteriousness of the divine wisdom, there is also its infinity and eternity. For Musculus, "infinite is the depth of the divine wisdom and his counsels, more to be adored than understood to the point of perfection".²⁸ Certainly, one can worship the divine author of this wisdom better than one can know it,

²⁴ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.1.85-86. Cf. n. 17 above for Aquinas' citations of Sir. 3:23.

²⁵ Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 8v.

²⁶ Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.190; cf. Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 866.

²⁷ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 43v.

²⁸ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 67.

and one who does not worship him who made the world and saved it in Christ does not yet understand any of it, for the cross stands at its centre, wherever else it shines. “Infinite”, Musculus again writes, “is the wisdom of God which everywhere, out of the fashioning of creatures, runs to meet the eyes of mortals”.²⁹ This wisdom, infinite, mysterious and transcendent, is also, finally, an eternal wisdom. Since God did not suddenly think up his wisdom at some moment in time, but always fully knows and is his wisdom, “the gospel”, according to Neils Hemmingsen (1513-1600), “is an eternal wisdom, as it has God for an eternal author”.³⁰ Hemmingsen here is contrasting the eternal divine wisdom with the many wisdoms of human imagining; their authors, unlike God, are mortal. As Paul says, “But we speak wisdom among the perfect, but not a wisdom of this age nor of the rulers of this age who are coming to nothing (τῶν καταργουμένων, *qui destruuntur*)” (1 Cor. 2:6). The ‘rulers of this age,’ its philosophers and kings, are mortal. Their wisdom, as we shall see momentarily, cannot save them from death and perishes with them, unless they consign it to writing or pass it on to their followers. First, however, we must determine precisely what commentators understood by Paul’s main designator for human wisdom, the “wisdom of words” (1 Cor. 1:17b), and its related terms. To do this, we begin by looking at the disciplines commentators identified with this wisdom.

The Identity of Human Wisdom

To refer to ‘human wisdom’ is already to anticipate the trajectory of the commentary tradition. At its beginnings, in Augustine and Ambrosiaster, Paul’s “wisdom of words” referred more specifically to particular disciplines, namely, philosophy and rhetoric respectively. For Ambrosiaster, Paul tells us that he came to preach the gospel “not in a wisdom of words, so that the cross of Christ is not emptied” (1 Cor. 1:17), “because the Christian proclamation does not need the showiness and cultivation of speech”; instead, God chose fishermen “so that it would not seem acceptable due to the craft and skill of human wisdom, rather than the truth”.³¹ Over a millennium later, Cardinal Cajetan, in his

²⁹ Ibid., col. 58.

³⁰ Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.31.

³¹ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 13; quoted in modified form in Lombard, *PL*191: 1541.

concern for the “literal sense”,³² also identifies the ‘wisdom of words’ (*sapientia sermonis*) as “the art of speaking”. But Cajetan thinks Paul is also opposing another wisdom, a ‘wisdom of things’ (*sapientia rerum*) which he identifies with the “philosophical sciences”, that is, the range of studies from astronomy to grammar to metaphysics.³³ Indeed, philosophy would be the predominant interpretation of Paul’s phrase in the tradition.

For Sedulius Scottus in the mid-ninth century, Paul was referring to “worldly philosophies”;³⁴ for the Gloss and Hugh of St. Cher, “the wisdom of philosophers”.³⁵ In the Reformation, the Lutheran Melanchthon identifies the ‘wisdom of words’ with philosophies which “so fight among themselves, that once philosophy is let in, immediately the gospel is obscured and Christ is obscured”.³⁶ For many commentators, however, philosophy was understood more broadly. The Gloss, for instance, also picks up a quotation of Augustine in which the bishop of Hippo says that Christ sent “a very few fishers with the nets of faith into the seas of this age”, “uneducated in the liberal disciplines..., not experienced with grammar, not armed with dialectic, not inflated with rhetoric”, and with them caught “so many fish of every kind”, including, “that much more wondrous for being rarer, even the philosophers”.³⁷

In the Carolingian period, as educational reforms re-emphasized the study of the trivium (grammar, logic or ‘dialectic,’ and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy), this sevenfold liberal education began to influence the exegesis of this passage. Haymo of Auxerre, for instance, named the “wisdom” which “the Greeks seek” (1 Cor. 1:22) as “human philosophy”. “Since”, he explains, “the seven liberal arts first and foremost grew in importance among them, on that account they treated the simple teaching of the faithful as nothing”.³⁸ Lanfranc of Bec (c.1005-1089), the first “scholastic” commentator,³⁹ mentions dialectic, logic and rhetoric by name, as well as the

³² Cf. ch. 1, n. 29.

³³ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 41r.

³⁴ Sedulius, *PL*103: 130.

³⁵ Gloss, col. 201; quoted by Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, ad litt., fol. 75r.

³⁶ Melanchthon, *Annot.*, fol. 80r.

³⁷ Augustine, *ciu.* 22.5; quoted by Gloss, col. 202-3.

³⁸ Haymo, *PL*117: 516.

³⁹ Margaret Gibson, “Lanfranc’s ‘Commentary on the Pauline Epistles,’” *Journal of Theological Studies* ns 22/1 (April 1971): 86.

quadrivium, comprising “especially the Platonic books”.⁴⁰ Lombard adds physics.⁴¹ Hugh of St. Cher, showing clearly the use (or lack of use) that these studies have as a basis of theology, provides a metaphor for the danger. Paul speaks “against those who, while reading theology, show themselves to know astronomy and other faculties like it, which are only an entry-way and are not to be used after one has entered. For the one who does use them is like a person who, entering through a doorway, bears the lintel on his neck”.⁴² Instead of leaving the liberal arts at the door and entering unencumbered into the spaciousness of the divine wisdom, one is hindered by the burden of human wisdom. As we will see below, other commentators, such as Aquinas and Calvin, believe the liberal disciplines retain certain uses, perhaps even in theology.

Aquinas’ own understanding of the ‘wisdom of words’ which Paul opposes in 1 Cor. 1:17b is a development of Peter Lombard’s gloss.⁴³ The first two understandings Aquinas proposes are drawn from Lombard, but they are the two dominant readings the tradition gives: philosophy and rhetoric. The first, philosophy, is a “worldly wisdom which makes people wordy insofar as by means of it people deploy many vain reasons”; the second is “rhetoric, which teaches one how to speak ornately, due to which people are sometimes drawn to assent to errors and falsehoods”.⁴⁴ Aquinas’ modification of the tradition here are his qualifiers ‘insofar as’ (*inquantum*) and ‘sometimes’ (*interdum*): philosophy and rhetoric are not to be used in the teaching of theology when they are abused, but they do have proper, limited uses.⁴⁵ His real contribution, however, is his clear vision of what unifies the earlier tradition. Aquinas gives a third possible interpretation of the *sapientia verbi*, namely, that it refers to human reason: “For since the Greek has *logos*, which means reason or speech, the ‘wisdom of words’ can be more appropriately understood as human reason, because those things which are of faith exceed human reason, as it says in Sir. 3:23, ‘More than you can understand has been

⁴⁰ Lanfranc of Bec, *PL*150: 157, 161. Cf. Hervé, *PL*181: 823; Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 39r.

⁴¹ Lombard, *PL*191: 1547.

⁴² Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, ad. litt., fol. 76v.

⁴³ Marie Hendrickx, *Sagesse de Dieu et sagesse des hommes. Le commentaire de saint Thomas d’Aquin sur 1 Co 1-4 et sa confrontation avec la Grande Glose de Pierre Lombard*, ThD dissertation (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1987), pp.345-54.

⁴⁴ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.3.41.

⁴⁵ Hendrickx, *Sagesse de Dieu et sagesse des hommes*, pp.352-54.

shown you””.⁴⁶ Thus, Aquinas gives unity to the insights of earlier commentators by finding the single category that draws together philosophy and rhetoric, logic and astronomy: human reason.

John Calvin, a few centuries later, gives an even more comprehensive understanding of “the wisdom of this world” (1 Cor. 1:20). He writes, “Here one should understand by ‘wisdom’ whatever a person can understand, whether by the faculty of one’s natural powers or by the aid of experience or literature or knowledge of the arts. For the Spirit of wisdom opposes ‘the wisdom of the world.’ Thus, whatever enters human intelligence without the enlightening of the Holy Spirit is here contained in ‘the wisdom of the world’”.⁴⁷ Calvin, then, goes even further than Aquinas to include anything that comes from humanity, not only reason but also experience and the collective fruits of civilization. All of this is useless, Calvin argues, when it comes to the divine wisdom, because that rests on a higher and inaccessible plane. God our teacher has determined that this would not be of any help to understanding his wisdom, for ‘the Spirit of wisdom’ is opposed to the proud efforts of any human faculty to reach him; instead, his wisdom must descend to us.

The Qualities of Human Wisdom

Now that we have a grasp of where commentators located ‘human wisdom,’ what are the characteristics of this wisdom? Why is it insufficient to attain knowledge of God? Why did “it please God” to save the world through his wisdom when the world did not know him through its own (1 Cor. 1:21)? Unlike the divine wisdom, which is eternal, infinite, mysterious and transcendent, human wisdom, according to the exegetical tradition, has three characteristics: it is only apparent and not real; it is natural to humanity (and not in any positive sense); finally, it is mortal because it does not bring humanity to eternal life but perishes with its authors.

It is Aquinas who especially emphasizes the ‘apparent’ nature of the wisdom of human reason. He writes that our proclamation is “an obstacle to Jews and foolishness to

⁴⁶ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.3.42. Cf. “Sagesse de la parole (1 Co 1, 17) selon saint Thomas d’Aquin. Le commentaire de Saint Thomas et la ‘Grande Glose’ de Pierre Lombard,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 110/3 (1988): 336-50, at pp.342-44. Cf. n. 17 above for Aquinas’ citations of Sir. 3:23.

⁴⁷ Calvin, *CO49*: 324.

Gentiles" (1:23) because "it seems against the reason of human wisdom".⁴⁸ The divine wisdom is not "in fact" foolishness; the apostle only speaks according to Gentile custom.⁴⁹ A little later, Aquinas specifies that "now something divine seems to be foolish, not because it is lacking in wisdom, but because it totally exceeds human wisdom. For people tend to consider something foolish when it exceeds their understanding. 'More than you can understand has been shown you' (Sir. 3:23)".⁵⁰ Thus, Aquinas clarifies that the 'apparent' foolishness of divine wisdom is due to its transcendence of human capacity to understand it; it seems or 'is seen' (*videtur*) as foolish, while in reality, it is the true wisdom of God—if only one has the Spirit-given capacity to perceive it as it really is. Aquinas details this most fully in his comments on 1 Cor. 3:18. There he explains, "'If someone considers themselves to be wise among you in this age,' that is, with the wisdom of this age which, by the fact that it is contrary to the truth of faith, is not wisdom although it appears to be; 'become foolish,' rejecting this apparent wisdom; 'in order to be wise,' namely, according to the divine wisdom, which is the true wisdom".⁵¹ Knowing, then, that the divine wisdom is true wisdom, even though the cross of Christ looks like utter foolishness on the face of it, we must not lean on our own understanding (cf. Prov. 3:5), which produces only a deceptive appearance of wisdom, but must trust instead in God, who knows and sees all things as they really are.

Besides the false appearance of wisdom, the 'naturalness' of this human wisdom is also a characteristic of Aquinas' reading of 1 Corinthians 1-4 and those influenced by him. Aquinas, however, seems to pick it up from a couple earlier exegetes. Robert Grosseteste (c.1175-1253), in the fragments that survive of his glosses, speaks of this naturalness of worldly wisdom in relation to 1 Cor. 3:18, "If someone considers themselves to be wise among you in this age, let them become foolish in order to be wise." For Grosseteste, this wisdom is 'natural' because it wants to prove everything by natural 'reasons' or 'proofs,' instead of believing on divine authority. He explains, "If someone is the kind of person who does not want to believe in anything that cannot be proved by natural reasons, which is 'to be wise in this age,' let them give up this knowledge and, at first, believe on authority without reason 'in order' at last 'to be wise,'

⁴⁸ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.3.58.

⁴⁹ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 16v.

⁵⁰ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.3.62. Cf. n. 17 above for Aquinas' citations of Sir. 3:23.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 3.3.178.

truly attaining to knowledge of those things above nature, not by natural proofs but by ordinary reasons, which show the omnipotence, wisdom and goodness of God to cohere such that he who does such things is indeed God”.⁵² Rather than relying on natural reasons to ‘prove’ the truth of God’s activity, one must first properly understand who God is, and then they will be able to perceive that events *supra naturam* are not foolishness, but true divine wisdom. As Denis the Carthusian will say a few centuries later, “Therefore, they err who affirm that faith can be demonstrated by natural reasons”.⁵³ Aquinas says more succinctly than Grosseteste that “due to a lack of wisdom they imagine it to be impossible for God to become human and suffer death in his human nature”.⁵⁴ In other words, they restrict what they consider possible for God to the limits of ‘nature’: to use the language of a later tradition derived from Aquinas, they ‘measure’ God by the creation.

Natural reasons are bound to the confines of nature. When one seeks to understand God, then, one must abandon these natural reasons for divine ones. Hugh of St. Cher seems the first to specify this talk of ‘natural reasons’ with the language of measuring God. He writes of those who “adhere to worldly wisdom too closely, regulating holy Scripture and things of faith according to it”.⁵⁵ One can neither ‘prove’ nor ‘regulate’ divine realities by natural human wisdom, because the human faculties of reason and perception are incapable of it. On 1 Cor. 3:19, Nicholas of Lyra writes, “For the greatest source of error is to wish to measure divine things, and those which totally transcend human understanding, by human reason. It is like a night owl who wants to judge the sunlight that totally exceeds its faculty of sight”.⁵⁶ As creatures, we do not possess a natural faculty capable of comprehending the light of God: we dare not ‘measure’ God by our insufficient perception of him. The Sorbonne professor Claude Guillaud (1493-1551) writes, “The world judges foolish what does not follow natural reason. What God does, those heights of the incarnation and the mysteries of redemption, are above nature.... Those things which are divinely inspired do not come to be measured by human

⁵² Robert Grosseteste, In.79-86.

⁵³ Denis the Carthusian, fol. 39r.

⁵⁴ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.3.50; cf. Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 37v.

⁵⁵ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, exp. gloss., fol. 75r.

⁵⁶ Nicholas of Lyra, col. 222; cf. Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.196.

reason”.⁵⁷ The acts of God, here again described as *supra naturam* (as in Grosseteste), operate according to the divine reason, and thus cannot be truly measured by natural and human reason.

Bugenhagen, in this vein, speaks of “philosophical reason” holding to what is “verisimilar and probable according to the flesh’s judgment or human reason”.⁵⁸ But it is Cardinal Cajetan who perhaps has the most complete development of this line of thought. Cajetan equates Greek wisdom with “demonstrative reason” or what is “at least consonant with reason as a means by which listeners should assent”.⁵⁹ Paul describes this human wisdom further in 1 Cor. 3:20, when he quotes Ps. 94:11 (LXX), “The Lord knows the thoughts (διαλογισμοὺς, *cogitationes*) of the wise, that they are vain.” “This”, according to Cajetan, “is a word about the ‘thoughts of the wise’ being extended to measure divine things. For they are clearly vain, inasmuch as they are altogether useless”.⁶⁰ Human reason, especially as a tool of demonstration, and its deliverances are a useless measure for the transcendent wisdom of God. Rather, “those wise with worldly wisdom should eschew measuring those things which are divinely revealed by the rules of human reason, but as far as revealed things of this kind go they should show themselves to be foolish, that is, without the reason of human wisdom, that they may become wise according to divine reasons”.⁶¹ Human reason is a natural faculty, and as such, it cannot help us when it comes to ‘divinely revealed’ matters. Instead, we need the aid of the ‘divine reasons’ to understand realities like the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection of Christ. Nor is this theme restricted to those dependent on Aquinas’ exegesis: Nicholas of Lyra, Denis the Carthusian and Cardinal Cajetan. The language of ‘measuring’ is not absent from Protestant commentators, such as Maior, Vermigli and Hemmingsen, who all deploy it.⁶² The naturalness, then, of human wisdom is the negative counterpart of the transcendence of divine wisdom. Human wisdom judges God by the limits it perceives in nature, and thinks God is unable to exceed them. Those who do so have not yet begun to be students of theology; they fail to learn anything because they are working with an inappropriate method and, what is more, a sinful heart.

⁵⁷ Guillaud, *Coll.*, fol. 96r.

⁵⁸ Bugenhagen, *Comm.*, fol. [B8]v.

⁵⁹ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 42r.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. 45v.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 41r; Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 42r; Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.21.

Finally, human wisdom, because it is closed to the eternal salvation that God provides, is only a temporary, mortal wisdom; it cannot escape the punishment of death. Reflecting on “the rulers of this age who are coming to nothing (*qui destruuntur*)” (1 Cor. 2:6), Haymo compares the bodily death of the philosophers to the raising of the dead by the apostles: “How are the philosophers and rulers of this age destroyed? By the death of the body they are reduced to dust and their wisdom is destroyed or reduced to nothing. Plato and Aristotle were destroyed by death and their wisdom is held as nothing in the Church”. They could also be destroyed, Haymo continues, because “taught by human wisdom”, they think it is impossible that the Son of God could be born of a virgin “since human nature does not admit of it”, but “when, by the invocation of this same Son of God, the apostles raise the dead, their wisdom is emptied and destroyed”.⁶³ As Nicolas of Gorran (1232-1295), a Parisian master slightly later than Aquinas, writes, Christ “destroyed natural reasons, by doing supernatural works”.⁶⁴ Thus, for Haymo there is a twofold mortality to human wisdom: first, the wisdom itself is destroyed when its false limits are undone by miracles, and second, the inventors of this wisdom are themselves destroyed by the death of their bodies.

Aquinas’ line of thinking is more focused on this second. Also commenting on 1 Cor. 2:6, “not a wisdom of this age nor of the rulers of this age,” Aquinas explains that Paul separates divine wisdom from worldly wisdom, both in terms of method and in terms of its “authors, who are the ‘rulers of this age’”. These rulers “are destroyed by death, and the loss of their power and authority.... As it says in Baruch 3:16, ‘Where are the rulers of the nations?’ And a little later, ‘They have been expelled (*exterminati*; cf. LXX ἡφανίσθησαν) and descended to Hades’ (3:19). As, then, they are not stable, their wisdom cannot be secure and, therefore, they are not to be relied upon”.⁶⁵ The mortality of the philosophers is an indication of the mortality of their teaching: when they die, the authority of their wisdom perishes with them. Likewise, Calvin writes, “Nor, in fact, is it right that eternal realities should depend on the authority of those who are unstable and passing away, who cannot give perpetuity even to themselves”.⁶⁶ The rulers of this world are not able to save themselves by their so-called wisdom, and this is a sure sign that

⁶³ Haymo, *PL*117: 520.

⁶⁴ Nicolas of Gorran, *Postil.*, fol. 60r.

⁶⁵ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.1.84.

⁶⁶ Calvin, *CO*49: 337.

theirs is not the true wisdom. Of course, no human being can save themselves from death; only God is the immortal, the undying, and so only he is qualified, as both Aquinas and Calvin highlight, to have the ‘authority’ as the teacher of eternal wisdom.

To these two mortalities of human wisdom, the mortality of human teachers and the subsequent loss of their teaching’s authority, Aquinas adds a third: the mortality of failing to reach one’s true final end. The “thoughts of the wise” are “empty” (1 Cor. 3:20), according to Aquinas, because “they do not achieve the end of human thought, which is the thought of divine truth. This is why Wis. 13:1 (Vulg.) says, ‘People are empty in whom there is not the wisdom of God’”.⁶⁷ Aquinas’ substitution of the Vulgate’s ‘knowledge’ for ‘wisdom’ here is telling because of the connection it evokes between the end of human thought, or life, and the wisdom of God. One is wise with human wisdom only for this life, but to be wise with the divine wisdom is to be wise for eternity. Thus, Catharinus writes, “For the wisdom of this world does not point out to us our true end, which is to cling to God, nor does it show the way there. Yet what makes a wise person wise is ordering all their actions to an end”.⁶⁸ Worldly, human wisdom is bounded by the limits of nature and death, but the wisdom of our maker exceeds these: God is the one who made nature, humanity and the world, and it is by ‘clinging’ to him that we become wise beyond the confines of these created realities.

If we abuse human wisdom by treating it as the measure and delimitation of spiritual and divine realities, then we must first “become foolish” (1 Cor. 3:18) by being disabused of our so-called wisdom before we can become truly wise with God’s wisdom. In this vein, Calvin argues that “it is characteristic of the gospel to so reduce the wisdom of the world in significance that, empty of our own understanding, we present ourselves teachable, and neither think, nor even desire, to know anything other than what the Lord himself teaches”.⁶⁹ God, in his economy, makes us teachable through the gospel in order to fruitfully teach us his wisdom. Then by the gospel’s proper work we will be turned from the naturalness and mortality of human wisdom to embrace the goodness of the true wisdom to be found in Christ, made wisdom for us. Bullinger writes, “Popular opinion deems true wealth to be that which the earth produces, but it is well mistaken. True

⁶⁷ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.3.180.

⁶⁸ Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.146.

⁶⁹ Calvin, *CO49*: 321.

riches are heavenly, which neither disappoint their owner nor are corruptible. In Christ, who is ‘the living bread coming down from heaven’ (Jn. 6:52), ‘are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ (Col. 2:3). Therefore, the treasure of the soul is Christ the Lord, the pledge of grace, in whom the heavenly Father gave us everything”.⁷⁰ In Christ, we find all that God desires to give us: our wisdom, justification, sanctification and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). This is obscured when, as Melanchthon puts it, human philosophy is introduced as the measure of reality, even divine reality.

Notwithstanding these dangers, within its proper limits human wisdom does have some God-given uses.⁷¹ The human and worldly knowledge that emerges from study of the creation is, in itself, a good thing, and even a gift of God. In the tradition, concern always arose when this knowledge exercised itself beyond its proper limits—in other words, with the abuse that comes from acting as lord rather than a servant. For “none of the pious ever once condemned them, but only their abuse”.⁷² Since, however, I am concerned with the place of theology within the divine οἰκονομία, and not with the other sciences, I restrict myself to the views of Aquinas and Calvin on the use and abuse of human wisdom in the teaching of theology.

For the Parisian master, there is an important distinction between, on the one hand, teaching “in the wisdom of words” (1 Cor. 1:17b) and, on the other, using this “wisdom of words” in teaching. The first refers to making human wisdom “the principal root of one’s teaching, and this is corruptive of faith”; the second—acceptable—way is, “with the foundations of the true faith laid, where truths are found in the teachings of philosophers, to take them up into the obedience of faith”.⁷³ Where these teachings are, in Olivi’s phrase, “true in themselves”, “they are taken up as a handmaid, not as a mistress, and as a light obscure and insufficient to lead to eternal life”.⁷⁴

In the Reformation, following the renewal of politics, medicine and other human arts and sciences, the usefulness of human wisdom in its own realm was even more pronounced. Calvin, for instance, can say, “For what is more noble than human reason, by which humanity excels other living things? Of how much honour are the liberal arts

⁷⁰ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 8v.

⁷¹ Cf. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, pp.269-70.

⁷² Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 9r.

⁷³ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.3.43.

⁷⁴ Olivi, *Postil.*, p.357. Cf. Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, ad litt., fol. 75r.

worthy, which so refine a person as to render them truly human"! ⁷⁵ This "light of reason, by which we all flourish", is a gift of God's Spirit, rather than any human or worldly spirit. ⁷⁶ The important qualification, however, to all this exuberance, is that human reason only has this excellence within the creaturely realm. Thus, all the human arts "are contained within their bounds, for they do not penetrate to the heavenly kingdom of God. For this reason, they ought to be attendants and not mistresses; in fact, it is appropriate to consider them empty and nothing until they are completely subject to the Word and Spirit of God". ⁷⁷ In this way, Calvin is in complete agreement with the earlier view of Aquinas (and Augustine) of the ancillary role of the human arts and sciences in the study of theology. They are good gifts within their proper limits; it is when they foolishly exceed these bounds that they metamorphose into vanities.

The Content of Divine Wisdom

Bypassing for the moment the question of how one transcends the wisdom gained by natural human faculties to attain the wisdom of God (although we have seen hints already in chapters one and two), I turn to examine the content of this divine wisdom. Since, again, the material one has to learn is determinative of the kind of moral, intellectual and spiritual qualities required of its learners, it is important to first of all understand what sort of the material the subject comprises. At just this point, however, we encounter one of the largest disagreements in the commentary tradition. All certainly agreed that only believers, those who had come to faith and received the Holy Spirit, ⁷⁸ could understand the divine wisdom as the truth it really is, in contrast with its apparent foolishness. Yet three opposing lines of interpretation developed regarding questions such as these: Is this wisdom available to all believers, all people with faith in Christ, or is there a more advanced group (i.e., the 'perfect') that can handle more complex matters? Does one progress by deepening in understanding the same realities, or by coming to understanding different, more difficult realities? Is there progress in understanding, or is Christian learning a matter of persevering in the simplicity of the true gospel? What is the

⁷⁵ Calvin, CO49: 325.

⁷⁶ Ibid., col. 344.

⁷⁷ Ibid., col. 359-60. Cf. Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 42r; Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 31v.

⁷⁸ See the discussion about who has the Spirit in chapter four, "The Non-Understanding of the 'Natural Person'."

relation of the salvation of the cross of Christ, which, as we saw above, is the ‘most important’ matter in Christian teaching (Aquinas) or ‘all the wisdom of the faithful’ (Calvin), to the subject-matter of theology?

In the main, these three opposing interpretations developed around two verses from the beginning of 1 Corinthians 2. There Paul writes, “I made a decision to know nothing among you, except Jesus Christ and him crucified.... But we speak wisdom among the perfect (τελείοις, *perfectos*)” (2:2, 6). For the first, minority line of thought, which is represented by the early Melancthon, 1 Cor. 2:2 implies that the subject-matter of theology is restricted to the crucified Christ. Any turning of our attention from this centre implies the attempt to establish salvation ourselves, a seeking to establish our own righteousness and wisdom (cf. Rom. 10:3). In a second, better represented interpretation, which I shall label ‘Protestant’ because, while it has some patristic and medieval antecedents, it comes to the fore in the exegesis of the Reformers, 1 Cor. 2:2 teaches that all Christian teaching is virtually contained in the cross. Theology has to do with other realities, but they are all related to the cross of Christ as the periphery to a centre. First Cor. 2:6 simply suggests that this Christ-centred teaching is a perfect wisdom or that those who believe are the ‘perfect’ who comprehend it. Finally, a third interpretation, which I shall call ‘Catholic,’ because it is both the answer of the great majority of the patristic and medieval tradition and the response of the Reformation-era Catholic commentators, sees 1 Cor. 2:2 as referring to believers of a lower level. The cross of Christ is where everyone must begin, but those who make progress and advance to the stature of the ‘perfect’ (2:6), become capable of instruction in higher realities, such as Christ’s two natures and the Trinity.

The key difference between the ‘Protestant’ and the ‘Catholic’ positions is this: for the former, the material content of what is taught to beginners and advanced is the same, but to the advanced the same material is taught in a deeper way; for the latter, the material taught to beginners and advanced is different: there is a set of topics that is reserved for the ‘perfect’ who are able to grasp them without harm. Of course, being a schematic, not every exegete neatly represents each interpretation; Robert of Melun and Cardinal Cajetan, for instance, produce statements that fit into both the ‘Protestant’ and ‘Catholic’ categories. That being said, relatively stable pictures of each interpretation do emerge, and one might be able to anticipate how each maps onto Lutheran, Reformed

and Catholic views of the moral and spiritual advance of the human person, of the justification and sanctification of the believer.

The first way of reading this passage, the ‘Lutheran,’ is represented in our survey solely by Melanchthon, and so I deal with it briefly. For Melanchthon, the whole divine wisdom is found, in an exclusive sense, in Christ and his cross. There is, for him, “no teaching apart from the knowledge of Christ which is not disease-ridden”.⁷⁹ Christian teaching is limited to Christ and the salvation he brings, to what is needed for the consolation of consciences before God. Anything outside of that is an attempt to seek salvation not from the crucified Christ, but from ourselves. Unlike the ‘Protestant’ reading, then, Melanchthon sees all Christian wisdom not as included in the cross *in nuce*, but as exhaustively expressed in it.

The ‘Protestant’ Option: All Wisdom Enclosed in the Cross

The second, majority ‘Protestant’ interpretation, while it sees all Christian teaching as centred in the cross, views other subjects as legitimate elaborations of this central teaching.⁸⁰ Thus, Calvin explicitly rejects Melanchthon’s way of reading Paul’s letter. On 1 Cor. 2:2, he writes that the apostle “adds ‘crucified,’ not because he understands himself to preach nothing in Christ besides the cross, but because amid the humility of the cross he nevertheless preaches Christ”.⁸¹ This proclamation of the cross of Christ, unlike in the early Melanchthon’s understanding, can take different forms or gradations depending on the capacity of one’s students, yet it is still the same material being taught to each one. This ‘Protestant’ element of the tradition originates with Augustine (although another quote from Augustine will feed the ‘Catholic’ reading). In his tractates on John, Augustine writes, “What the spiritual and carnal hear at the same time, they grasp in their own measure—these as infants, those as mature, these as the nourishment of milk, those as the sustenance of food—and there seems to be no necessity that any secrets of teaching be kept silent and hidden from the faithful infants and separately spoken to the mature,

⁷⁹ Melanchthon, *Annot.*, fol. 82v.

⁸⁰ John Webster reads 1 Cor. 2 in this way in “Curiosity,” in *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), p.201.

⁸¹ Calvin, *CO49*: 333.

that is, the more intelligent”.⁸² On this reading, when Paul says he only gave the Corinthians milk to drink, and not solid food, he does not mean that he withheld certain teachings, but that the same teaching he gives to the mature these “infants in Christ” (1 Cor. 3:1) could only grasp in a small, suckling measure; they did not yet have the teeth for the full meat of it.

In the ‘Protestant’ tradition of interpretation, this difference is often parsed not in terms of listeners of differing capacities grasping the same teaching, but in terms of differing modes of teaching accommodated to varying levels of listeners. Here there is not a single, diverse audience in view, but audiences of different levels. Thus, Robert of Melun, in the twelfth century, writes in this vein that “it seems as though the apostle passed on imperfect teaching to them, and so deceived them. But it can be said that faith is taught in two ways, either by simply laying out what is to be believed, or by giving an explanation of what is to be believed, that is, by explaining what is to be believed and in what way and why”. In Corinth, the apostle took the former route, according to Robert.⁸³ With a more mature audience, the apostle would have explained the teaching, its purposes and reasons, more fully. It is the same sort of modulation of Augustine’s view that one finds in Calvin. On 1 Cor. 3:1-2, he writes, making a distinction that is key to separating the ‘Protestant’ and ‘Catholic’ views, that this verse “refers to the method or form of teaching rather than the substance of the teaching. For the same Christ is ‘milk’ to children and ‘solid food’ to adults; both are the same truth of the gospel, but administered to each in their own measure”.⁸⁴ In this way, rather than students ‘grasping’ the same method of teaching with more or less understanding (as in Augustine), teachers ‘administer’ the same teaching by accommodating their method to the level of their students. This accommodation is, according to Bugenhagen, the *ars Apostolorum*.⁸⁵

This basic Protestant motif was elaborated in many forms. Sebastian Meyer, in terms reminiscent of Robert of Melun, argues that ‘milk’ represents “instruction in morals, discipline and ceremonies, which the beginners are simply commanded to observe, not having the reason explained as to what they signify and to what they are to

⁸² Augustine, *Io. ev. tr.* 98.3; quoted partially in Gloss, col. 215, also citing Haymo, for which see n. 126 below; also quoted with modifications by Lombard, *PL*191: 1554.

⁸³ Robert of Melun, *Qu. ep. Pauli*, p.179.

⁸⁴ Calvin, *CO*49: 347.

⁸⁵ Bugenhagen, *Comm.*, fol. H3r.

be related.... It is 'solid food' when what they signify, and to what end, is explained, that they, of course, are to be related to Christ" as our priest and sacrifice, our king, mediator and saviour.⁸⁶ Like Robert, for Meyer 'milk' signifies the simple proposition of truth for belief, whereas 'solid food' the explanation of these truths and their interconnectedness. Musculus, along the same lines, writes that 'milk' and 'solid food' "are not to be understood as one and another kinds of teaching, but clearly the same, not varying in matter but in breadth and explication", just as each possesses the same faith and not different kinds.⁸⁷ Hemmingsen, again, understands 'milk' and 'solid food' to represent "the same teaching of the gospel, but differing only in the method of delivery". 'Milk' refers to the "simple speech and nascent words" of the catechism, while 'solid food' refers to "grander speech" and "a fuller explanation" of the same realities.⁸⁸ The contribution of Vermigli is similar. 'Milk' comprises "the easier and more open" truths surrounding "the first chapters of religion, in which knowledge of the law and gospel are taught in an easy and express manner", as, again, in the catechism, while 'solid food' means the same things explained both "more highly and more deeply". Importantly, with the Corinthians, Paul "had kept silent about nothing", agreeing with Augustine's denial of matters about which a teacher keeps silence.⁸⁹ Finally, Calvin himself, commenting on the structure to be built on Christ the foundation (1 Cor. 3:10-12), warns, "Further, let us not imagine this teaching [i.e., the superstructure] to be outside of Christ, but rather let us understand that one must continue teaching Christ until the completion of the building. Only let this order be maintained: let a beginning be made from general teaching and the more necessary chapters, as from the foundations, and then admonitions, exhortations, and whatever else is required for perseverance, confirmation and progress may follow".⁹⁰ Throughout Reformed exegesis, then, the difference between the material taught to beginners and the advanced is not understood as one of content but one of depth. It is the difference between the answers of the catechism, meant to be memorized and recited, and a progressively more penetrating explanation and understanding of the same reality of Christ and him crucified.

⁸⁶ Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 18r-v.

⁸⁷ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 79.

⁸⁸ Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.43.

⁸⁹ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 64v.

⁹⁰ Calvin, CO49: 355.

For this reason, the Reformed can say—in a much different sense than Melanchthon—that all Christian wisdom is contained in the cross of Christ. When Paul says that he “made a decision to know nothing among you, except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2), he is not saying he held back certain secret matters from their ears, but only that he preached a simple gospel which had none of the rhetorical or philosophical trappings of the party leaders in Corinth. It is in this sense that Calvin writes, as we have seen, “For all the wisdom of the faithful is enclosed in the cross of Christ”⁹¹—‘enclosed’ not in an exclusive, but in an inclusive sense. Bullinger makes a slight but important revision to Col. 2:3 when he writes, “In the cross [!] of Christ is hidden all true wisdom and salvation”.⁹² Aquinas, as we will see, puts—an unmodified citation of—this verse to very different use to suggest a ‘Catholic’ reading of this passage. Oddly enough, it is Thomas’ distant pupil Cajetan who gives the best formal definition of the ‘Protestant’ position: “For the whole gospel material is virtually comprehended in this”, namely, Christ crucified.⁹³

For the Protestant Reformers, and those medieval antecedents that support a similar understanding of Paul’s statement, the connections the cross holds to all the other saving works of God allow for an inclusive sense to ‘Christ crucified.’ Peter of John Olivi, for instance, writing in the late thirteenth century, argues that “by Christ Jesus crucified he intends the whole substance of faith and the law and the life of Christ as contained in Christ crucified. But he speaks in this way then to show that he did not lay out the whole explicitly from the beginning, but as implied in the principal articles and elements and seeds of faith”.⁹⁴ All the teaching about Christ, and the wisdom he is for us, is ‘contained’ in the cross, but only implicitly. It remains for it to be drawn out as a student progresses in an ever deepening understanding of it. Nicholas of Amiens, in a very significant moment, claims that both the humanity and the divinity of Christ are to be understood from the cross and resurrection of Christ. In the saying, “Christ was crucified”, Nicholas writes, “the death and resurrection of Christ are held implicitly; that is, that Christ both died and was raised; that is, that Christ was such that he both suffered death, because he was a human being, and death could not rule him, because he was the Word of the

⁹¹ Calvin, CO49: 320.

⁹² Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 20r. Cf. idem, fol. 36r.

⁹³ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 42r.

⁹⁴ Olivi, *Postil.*, p.360.

Father. In which both natures of Christ, divine and human, are understood”.⁹⁵ As we will soon see, a key element in the ‘Catholic’ reading is the belief that ‘Christ crucified’ refers only to the simpler truths of his humanity, whereas the more difficult topics related to his divinity are reserved for the more advanced.

The Reformed commentators understood the inclusivity of the wisdom of the cross of Christ in terms quite similar to Olivi and Nicholas of Amiens. Vermigli states the matter more formally in writing, “When he recalls the Crucified, it encompasses all things which are connected to the death and cross of Christ, whether beforehand or afterward”.⁹⁶ It is Musculus, writing just shy of a decade after Vermigli—and clearly borrowing from him—who details the various topics and connections. But Musculus also highlights the special, mysterious nature of the knowledge Paul intends: “When he recalls the knowledge of Christ crucified, he does not understand by it simply the history of the crucifixion of Christ, which the unbelieving Jews certainly knew and saw, but the mystery of the cross, hidden from every unbeliever, in which ‘are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ of God (Col. 2:3)”. This is why, when Paul says, ‘I made a decision to know nothing...’, he means, “except the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, the Lord of heaven and earth, and at the same time, his victory over death, Satan and hell, and the redemption, liberation and reconciliation with God of the whole human race, and the restoration of ‘all things which are in heaven and on earth’ (Col. 1:20), and, in sum, the restoration of true and eternal happiness. For the knowledge of Christ, and him crucified, encompasses all these things in itself”.⁹⁷ On this reading, then, to say that Paul desired to know nothing except the crucified Christ is not restrictive but expansive. This centre bears all the ‘treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ within itself, and offers itself, as we will see, as a life-long curriculum for the believer. Thus, while there is nothing ‘outside’ of Christ and the cross that one should seek to know in theology, this is not, as it was with Melanchthon, an exclusive and limiting claim; rather, this centre is connected to all God’s works and ways.

It is understandable, in this light, that the ‘Protestant’ did not take 1 Cor. 2:6, about “wisdom among the perfect,” to infer a special set of subjects reserved for the

⁹⁵ Nicholas of Amiens, *Comm. Porr.*, p.28. Cf. Haymo, nn. 126-27 below.

⁹⁶ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 39v.

⁹⁷ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 50.

advanced. Although spoken long before sixteenth-century divisions, a moment in Chrysostom's homily on 1 Cor. 2:6 is echoed in later Reformed commentary: Paul "calls 'wisdom' the proclamation and the mode of salvation, being saved through the cross. And the 'perfect' are those who have believed. For those who know that human things are very feeble, and who despise them, are the 'perfect'".⁹⁸ This verse, for Chrysostom, implies an uncomplicated relationship between 1 Cor. 2:2 and 2:6. Wisdom is the gospel of the cross; the perfect believe in it, because they know human wisdom to be worth nothing for salvation. In the Reformation, Zwingli suggests that 'wisdom among the perfect' is a "Hebrew expression" for "perfect wisdom". Zwingli explicitly denies that the 'perfect' are a class of people, saying, "But he understands by it the teaching, not the Corinthians. As if he said, we speak of difficult, perfect and divine things".⁹⁹ Bullinger and Meyer both follow him in this explanation of 'wisdom among the perfect' as a Hebrew idiom for 'perfect wisdom,' the former mentioning (disapprovingly) those who take the 'perfect' to refer to a class of believers.¹⁰⁰

In fact, the Reformed are explicit about their rejection of any idea of different, higher matters meant to be spoken to a separate group of advanced students. Musculus, for instance, writes, "But altogether to be rejected is the understanding of those who think the apostle to be speaking of a certain wisdom, loftier than the word of the cross, which he communicated separately to the more perfect".¹⁰¹ It is clear who the targets were here. The Reformed, and Protestants in general, joined earlier critics of scholasticism who railed against what they saw as the abstraction and uselessness of much of what passed for theological education in the schools. The Reformers, in contrast, were focused on the salvation to be found in Christ and him crucified. But they were also concerned with those who, rejecting the Word, sought mysteries from the Spirit. In this vein, Bullinger writes against those "who even today search out and propound certain mysteries and very high hidden things of the spirit, going on in this way about many things of some spirit, so that meanwhile the blessings of the cross and the incarnation of Christ are forgotten".¹⁰² There is to be no separation, on the 'Protestant' reading,

⁹⁸ Chrysostom, *Hom.* 7.1, PG61: 55.

⁹⁹ Zwingli, *Ep. aliq. Pauli*, p.453.

¹⁰⁰ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 21r; cf. Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 12r.

¹⁰¹ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 56.

¹⁰² Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 14v.

between the simple message of the gospel of Christ crucified and a higher wisdom of more intricate matters. One progresses in this wisdom only by clinging to the cross with greater understanding and tenacity. Students should not seek to move beyond the cross to more subtle topics; rather, ‘Christ and him crucified’ shows us, according to Calvin, “both what faithful ministers ought to teach, and what we are to be learning our whole lives, and that for the sake of which everything else is to be held as rubbish”.¹⁰³ There is, thus, no point in the course of the believer’s life at which she may move beyond the cross of Christ: there is her joy, her salvation, and there is Jesus, made for her the wisdom of God.

The ‘Catholic’ Option: The Twofold Wisdom of Christ’s Two Natures

The ‘Catholic’ way of understanding 1 Corinthians 2, on the other hand, predominated in the patristic and medieval periods, and was retained, with slight modifications, by Reformation-era Catholics. While it certainly bears greater affinity to the ‘Protestant’ reading than the early Melanchthonian—and indeed, the ‘Protestant’ is itself closer to the ‘Catholic’ than Melanchthon in most regards—the ‘Catholic’ position is distinguished by its division of learners into two or three categories. Thus, crucial differences emerge in the understanding of both 1 Cor. 2:2 and 2:6 compared to the ‘Protestant’ tradition. The ‘Catholic’ reading understands the apostle in 1 Cor. 2:2 to speak of the crucified Christ and his humanity only “among you” who are, in the words of the Gloss, “less capable”.¹⁰⁴ Conversely, in 1 Cor. 2:6 the apostle turns to the “perfect” who are able to grasp the subtler difficulties of Christ’s incarnation and divinity and the mysteries of the Trinity. Rather than, as in the ‘Protestant’ understanding, progressing as a student by grasping ever deeper explanations of the reality of Christ crucified, in the ‘Catholic’ position one progresses by moving from the simpler matters of Christ’s humanity to the more difficult—both intellectually and spiritually—matters of Christ’s divinity and eternal Sonship.

This ‘Catholic’ distinction was made from the earliest centuries of Christianity. Already in the third century Origen (d.c.254) argues, commenting on 1 Cor. 2:6, “For it is one thing to introduce people to the faith and another to reveal the wisdom of God.

¹⁰³ Calvin, *CO49*: 333-34; cf. Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.28.

¹⁰⁴ Interlinear Gloss, col. 207-8. Cf. n. 113 below.

Therefore, we disclose the wisdom of God not to those who are being introduced, nor to beginners, nor to those who have not yet given evidence of a clean life. But when a person, having ‘trained’ in the necessary way ‘their faculties to distinguish good from evil’ (Heb. 5:14), becomes fit to hear wisdom, then ‘we speak wisdom among the perfect’.”¹⁰⁵ In Origen’s schema, there are some matters for beginners and others for those who have ‘trained’ and advanced morally and spiritually. This “solid food” for the advanced (1 Cor. 3:2) includes, for Origen, teaching about perfect chastity, virginity, prudence, martyrdom, and the mysteries of the Father and Son. It thus spans both ethical (ἐν ἡθικοῖς) and theological (ἐν μυστικοῖς) matters.¹⁰⁶ Ambrosiaster, the root of the Latin commentary tradition, writes similarly that “although they were reborn in Christ, yet it was not a worthy thing to hand over to them spiritual matters. For, having received faith, which is like a spiritual seed, they had not brought forth fruit worthy of God that they would deserve to learn words of perfection, but as infants they were eager for the senses of imperfection. So the apostle, as a saintly man and spiritual physician, handed over to each according to their powers, so that no one was scandalized about spiritual things due to imperfection and inexperience”.¹⁰⁷ In the same way as Origen, Ambrosiaster distinguishes between the introductory stage of faith and the later stage of fruitful, moral progress. One needs to be living according to the commandments in order to helpfully receive spiritual teaching; otherwise, it might actually do one harm.

This idea that spiritual teaching needs to be adapted to the stage of the student was common in the patristic and early medieval tradition. For Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Paul “measured, he says, his teaching by the weakness of the listener”.¹⁰⁸ Likewise the Gloss draws the metaphor that “just as treatment is the way to health, so the medicine of wisdom was accommodated to our wounds by the taking up of a human being” in the incarnation.¹⁰⁹ Both God, in taking on flesh, and Paul, by dispensing only ‘milk’ and not ‘solid food,’ displayed this pedagogical wisdom. As God our teacher lowered himself to our level, theologians should lower their teachings to the level of their students. A student who is given too much too quickly will not benefit from it, but will actually be

¹⁰⁵ Origen, *fr.* 9, pp.238-39.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, *fr.* 12, p.242.

¹⁰⁷ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 32; quoted by Raban Maur, *PL*112: 29.

¹⁰⁸ Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *PG*82: 245.

¹⁰⁹ Gloss, col. 203.

harmful. Ambrosiaster even argues that giving every student the same teaching is a sign of a false teacher: “For the false apostles handed on one and the same kind [of teaching] to everyone indiscriminately, discerning no one’s person”.¹¹⁰ A true spiritual teacher will be able to discern the level of one’s students, both intellectual and moral, and offer only those teachings that are appropriate. Atto of Vercelli believes that there is great danger for beginning students if a teacher fails to make this distinction. “For if”, Atto writes, “they are entrusted with great things, they will be repeatedly scandalized, and faith in Christ will be extinguished in them, in the same way that infants, unless nursed with milk, die if they take solid food, being too weak”.¹¹¹ Being too much to grasp, higher teachings could actually choke the spiritual life out of an unprepared student. They will be ‘scandalized’—as both Ambrosiaster and Atto argue—in their faith, rather than built up in it. This is contrary to a teacher’s aim, which is to benefit their students in their faith. Thus, the Gloss says that the one who “speaks higher things to the less capable aims not at usefulness but at self-display”.¹¹² They forget, in other words, who they are and what they are doing. Theologians are given by God as servants of their students; to spout complex reflections without regard for their students’ comprehension or lack thereof is sinful pride.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, this universal teaching would continue to dominate, not least because of the Gloss’ influential interpretation of 1 Cor. 2:2. As we saw above, the Gloss restricts the scope of Paul’s decision to know nothing except Christ and him crucified because the apostle adds “among you,” which is taken to mean the “less capable”.¹¹³ Among others, the “perfect” of 1 Cor. 2:6, Paul could speak of divine realities. In the high scholastic period, Aquinas turns this teaching into a tidy syllogism: “Teachings are not to be handed on to anyone who cannot grasp them, but ‘natural people’ (1 Cor. 2:14) cannot grasp spiritual teachings; therefore, they are not to be handed on to them”.¹¹⁴ Instead, in Olivi’s judgment, “to the imperfect and sensual simple teaching is to be handed on in a simple way”.¹¹⁵ Teaching is to be adapted, as the ‘Protestant’ agree, to the capacity to the listener. Yet the ‘Catholic’ interpreters

¹¹⁰ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 32; quoted by Raban Maur, *PL*112: 29.

¹¹¹ Atto of Vercelli, *PL*134: 314.

¹¹² Gloss, col. 207.

¹¹³ Interlinear Gloss, col. 207-8; quoted by Lombard, *PL*191: 1547.

¹¹⁴ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.3.111.

¹¹⁵ Olivi, *Postil.*, p.361.

understand something quite different by this. For the ‘Protestant’ position, on the one hand, the same truths are to be taught in a simple way to immature believers; for the ‘Catholic,’ on the other hand, there are some truths for the simple and other, more ‘spiritual’ truths which teachers are to give only to those who give evidence of a holy life and spiritual progress. It is in this sense that, perhaps a couple decades after Aquinas and influenced by the Gloss’ language of ‘capacity,’ Nicolas of Gorran writes, “One is to preach to each according to their capacity. But carnal infants are not capable of the reasons of the spiritual wisdom of God; therefore, they are not to be preached”.¹¹⁶ The same syllogistic logic is applied as in Aquinas to reinforce what is by now an almost universal reading of Paul’s letter.

Augustine’s judgment, as we saw above, that teachers do not need to keep any secrets because students will each grasp what they are capable of understanding, interjects only a small difficulty into the ‘Catholic’ tradition.¹¹⁷ Hugh of St. Cher is capable of it, suggesting a way of reading this passage of Augustine that coheres with a two-stage model of theological education. Hugh writes, “All spiritual teachings necessary to salvation are to be preached to everyone, but more subtle reasons can be drawn out for the better students by which they become food for them, and they are more easily explained for the lesser that they may receive them as nourishing milk. Thus what is said here [by Augustine], ‘There is no necessity that any secrets,’ etc., is understood of teachings necessary to salvation”.¹¹⁸ By this skillful interpretation, Hugh totally blunts the force of Augustine’s assertion. The teachings necessary to salvation, the truths that birth faith, are to be shared with everyone because they are the entry-way to the Christian life. There is no need to keep them silent—but there are other matters which could be dangerous for beginners to hear.

Erasmus, who was usually so influential for the Reformers’ exegesis, sides in this matter with the ‘Catholic’ tradition. His reading seems influenced both by Hugh’s interpretation here, and by the Gloss’ ‘capacity’ terminology. Paraphrasing 1 Cor. 2:6, Erasmus writes, “To you who are swollen with human wisdom but ignorant of the divine wisdom, we laid down matters that were simpler but necessary for salvation. We also

¹¹⁶ Nicolas of Gorran, *Postil.*, fol. 63r.

¹¹⁷ Cf. n. 82 above.

¹¹⁸ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, exp. gloss., fol. 78v.

possess more hidden things about Christ, but we speak them among the perfect. Take care, therefore, that you may be perfect, in which you will be capable of the mysteries".¹¹⁹ He continues, "We do not toss out these more secret matters in public, but we communicate them in secret to those who are worthy".¹²⁰ Either ignorant of Augustine's judgment or aware of Hugh's—or dependent on Augustine's more 'Catholic' passage below—Erasmus unabashedly acknowledges that theology holds certain teachings in reserve, maintaining both the health of its students and the honour of its teachings by its silence.

In the heavy air of the Reformation, this line of interpretation was directed toward the controversial question of access to the Scriptures. Jean de Gagny argues, on the basis of 1 Cor. 3:2, that people "are not to be admitted everywhere and everyhow to the reading of the holy letters".¹²¹ One can see how easily the 'Catholic' position leads to such a stance on the public availability of the Scriptures, and the reasoning behind it. If indiscriminate exposure to spiritual teaching can lead the simple to loss their faith, then unquestionably they need discerning guides. Even a Reformer like Vermigli has concerns about the new situation. "So today as well", he writes, "since some blasphemers and mockers cannot be deprived of the holy books by public laws without harming the greater part of the Christian people, it is therefore better that all are indiscriminately permitted".¹²² Even though some abuse will admittedly come of allowing those who are morally and spiritually incapable to read Scripture, it is better, Vermigli argues on 'Protestant' grounds, than restricting their use to a special class of people.

Now having traced the development and modifications of this reading from Origen through the Reformation period, I turn to a crucial related question: what is the content of this higher, reserved wisdom? If not the crucified Christ, what does it comprise? We saw that, for Origen, the answer included various advanced ethical and theological teachings. But for most of the tradition, the answer is more straightforward: the simple learn of Christ's humanity and the 'perfect' of his divinity. The impulse here comes from two patristic quotes, one from Augustine and another from Gregory the Great. In his work on the Trinity, Augustine gives an interpretation of 1 Cor. 2:2 that restricts it, in the same

¹¹⁹ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 864.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, col. 865.

¹²¹ de Gagny, *Schol.*, fol. 38v.

¹²² Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 43v.

manner we will later see in the Gloss, to those who are ‘less capable.’ Augustine argues that in 1 Cor. 2:2 Paul “is speaking to those who cannot grasp the higher matters of the divinity of Christ”.¹²³ Thus, the ‘capacity’ of the Corinthians to ‘grasp’ (*capere*) Paul’s teaching determines that he will not speak to them of Christ’s divinity, but only, it is implied, his humanity. A closely parallel extract from Gregory the Great’s homilies on Ezekiel—cited more times than Augustine in the medieval commentaries on 1 Corinthians—draws out this implication: “Since I did not think you could grasp the mysteries of his divinity, I spoke to you only of the feebler matters of his humanity”.¹²⁴ With Augustine and Gregory, two of the most highly respected patristic exegetes, in agreement, the terms were set for the remainder of the medieval period.

This distinction was often worked out in terms of the “milk” and “solid food” of 1 Cor. 3:2. For the Carolingian exegete Sedulius Scottus, ‘milk’ was “basic teaching” and ‘solid food’ “obscure mysteries and dense teaching”.¹²⁵ Haymo of Auxerre expanded on this to say that ‘milk’ is “simple teaching about the humanity of Christ, not the ‘solid food’ of the divinity of Christ and the mystery of the Trinity”.¹²⁶ Thus, when Paul says that he decided to preach only Christ crucified, this “encompasses all the mysteries related to his humanity”, such as his birth, crucifixion, entombment and resurrection. This seems similar to the ‘Protestant’ position on the cross’ inclusion of all God’s wisdom, but there is an important division between what the cross indicates (Jesus’ humanity) and what ‘wisdom among the perfect’ signifies (his divinity). Haymo paraphrases, “Since you were not able to grasp the high mysteries of the divinity of Christ, ...I decided in my heart to preach to you only those things which are related to the humanity of Jesus Christ and which you were able to penetrate”.¹²⁷

In the redolent air of the twelfth-century schools, this theology of Christ’s humanity as ‘milk’ became mixed with eucharistic imagery. Thus, the Gloss’ “sweet and nourishing”¹²⁸ milk became, in the hands of Hervé of Bourg-Dieu, “the flesh of the Saviour

¹²³ Augustine, *trin.* 1.12; quoted by Florus of Lyons, *PL*119: 320; quoted with modifications in Lanfranc of Bec, *PL*150: 161.

¹²⁴ Gregory the Great, *HEz.* 1.9.31; quoted by Raban Maur, *PL*112: 22; Gloss, col. 209; Hervé, *PL*181: 830-31.

¹²⁵ Sedulius, *PL*103: 133.

¹²⁶ Haymo, *PL*117: 523.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, *PL*117: 519.

¹²⁸ Interlinear Gloss, col. 215-16; quoted by Lombard, *PL*191: 1553. Cf. Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 40r.

pressed out for infants. For just as a mother eats food that she may transfer it to her infant, made into milk through her flesh, so ‘the bread of angels’ (Ps. 78:25), the Lord, the Word, ‘was made flesh’ (Jn. 1:14), and was made milk. Milk is, truly, our humble Christ; our food is the very same Christ, equal to the Father”.¹²⁹ The same schema of Christ’s humanity as milk and his divinity as solid food, reserved for the mature, is present, but transformed into the meditative idiom of eucharistic piety. Robert of Melun will express the same truth in less moving words. The truths of Christ’s humanity “bear greater affinity to us” than those of his divinity, and as a result, “it is less difficult for us to understand that God died in the flesh he took on, than that God is one in essence but three in persons”. These latter truths are “more distant” from us, and therefore, “more difficult to understand”.¹³⁰ All of these considerations, let us not forget, are grounded in an understanding of God’s pedagogy. As a good teacher, God begins with those truths that are simpler and more necessary for us to know before moving on to more difficult topics. Thus, God begins by teaching us of Christ’s humanity before drawing us upward to the light of his divinity.

This nourishing milk is also, importantly, the saving truths that will birth faith in our souls and allow us to begin bearing the moral and spiritual fruit by which we progress along the way to perfection. By drinking in this milk of Christ’s humanity, meditating on the realities of his incarnation, earthly life, suffering, death and resurrection, we are made sufficiently holy for—and therefore, ‘capable’ of—the solid food of his divinity, his existence as God together with the Father and Holy Spirit. Lombard emphasizes, in alignment with the later Hugh of St. Cher,¹³¹ that “Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2) refers to Christ insofar as he is “our Saviour and ruler. And this by the crucifixion”—insofar, that is, as the cross of Christ is the source of our salvation.¹³² Cajetan, similarly, will write that “‘Jesus’ signifies the author of human salvation.... And the crucifixion has regard to the weakness of the assumed nature, to the way in which he redeemed the human race. And this is truly enough to know for our salvation”.¹³³ We can be saved simply by looking to the crucified humanity of Jesus, and placing our faith in that One,

¹²⁹ Hervé, *PL*181: 838.

¹³⁰ Robert of Melun, *Qu. ep. Pauli*, p.178.

¹³¹ Cf. n. 118 above.

¹³² Lombard, *PL*191: 1547.

¹³³ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 43r.

without needing to understand the complexities of trinitarian theology or Christ's two natures.

The focus of Aquinas, to come to him at last, is not on the distinction between the humanity and divinity of Christ, though he does hold to it, but on the salvation emphasized by Lombard's reading. For Aquinas, Paul is most concerned in 1 Cor. 2:2 to show not his wisdom, but a demonstration of the power of Christ (cf. 2:4). The apostle does not preach himself (2 Cor. 4:5), but 'glories' in knowing and understanding God (Jer. 9:24). So the apostle does not want to know anything but the cross, the path of salvation by which we come to know God. For, as we saw at the beginning of this chapter, "what is most important in the teaching of Christian faith is the salvation accomplished by the cross of Christ".¹³⁴ Yet, Aquinas writes, "in Christ Jesus, as Col. 2:3 says, 'are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' with regard to the fullness of deity and the fullness of wisdom and grace and the profound reasons of the incarnation, which nevertheless the apostle did not announce to them, but only those things which were clearer and more basic in Christ Jesus. And so he adds, 'and him crucified'".¹³⁵ It is the cross of Christ in which we have our boasting, because God saves us by that foolish wood. Yet this does not exhaust who Jesus is: in him are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom of God. As one comes to know the Saviour, and holds to him (*inhaerendo*) ever more closely,¹³⁶ one begins to understand the heights and depths of God's wisdom, the fullness (*plenitudo*) of wisdom to be found in Christ, who was made wisdom for us. This is the "deep teaching 'we speak among the perfect'".¹³⁷

Later commentators, particularly Denis the Carthusian and Gregorio Primaticci, continued to hold to this twofold 'Catholic' schema,¹³⁸ even as it began to undergo slight late medieval and Reformation-era changes. In Catharinus' hands, for instance, Paul's knowledge of the cross means his imitation of the sufferings of Christ's earthly life;¹³⁹ in Primaticci's, the humanity of the Crucified refers only to "historical" teaching about Christ (contra Musculus).¹⁴⁰ In any case, for the 'Catholic' reading, 'Christ and him crucified' is

¹³⁴ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.3.45.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.1.75.

¹³⁶ Cf. Aquinas, ch. 1, n. 20 above.

¹³⁷ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.1.81.

¹³⁸ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 39r.

¹³⁹ Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.149.

¹⁴⁰ Primaticci, *Lit. exp. ep. Pauli*, fol. 86r. Cf. n. 97 above (Musculus).

not so much the centre, as in the ‘Protestant’ option, as the base or ‘milk’ from which one begins but from which one eventually turns one’s attention to perceive the spiritual and divine realities of the infinite and transcendent wisdom of God.

Conclusion

The knowledge that is given to those who are, in Origen’s phrase, ‘being introduced’—the ‘teachings necessary to salvation’—gives birth to the life of faith in the human heart and allows one to pass from the mortality of human wisdom to the eternity of life with the Father. These are the foundational teachings about baptism, repentance, forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:38) which are given by Jesus, who was crucified, but whom God raised up (2:23-24). As we move on to teachings which are *altius atque profundius*, as Vermigli describes them, there is a corresponding deepening and heightening of the new spiritual life that is at work in our souls. Growing both ἐν ῥηθικοῖς and ἐν μυστικοῖς, according to Origen, we begin to share ever more deeply in that transcendent, infinite and mysterious wisdom of God as the Spirit teaches us.

This gospel wisdom creates a new life in our whole person—intellectual and affective, moral and spiritual. We become, in other words, able students of the knowledge of God. The divine wisdom gives us a new, spiritual understanding, making us share in the “mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). We begin to perceive, insofar as we are able as creatures, God, and everything else in his light. The divine wisdom also turns our hearts in love towards the God who loved us before the foundation of the world (cf. Eph. 1:4-5): “For this knowledge, that Christ died for us and similar things, unless a person is a sinner and hardened, moves one to love”.¹⁴¹ But the divine wisdom also teaches us to love our neighbours and flee the sin of the world; it gives us, in other words, the moral knowledge necessary to develop self-control, endurance and purity of heart. These moral-spiritual qualities free us to, in reliance on prayer and the Spirit, resist the beguilements of the wisdom that is “earthly, natural, demonic” (Jas. 3:15) and love God and all God has made without inner resistance.

In the examination of students (chapter four) and teachers (chapters five and six) of theology that follows, it is this divine wisdom that is in view as the subject of learning

¹⁴¹ Bonaventure, *Comm. in I. Librum Sententiarum*, prooem. q.3 conc. (*Opera omnia*, 1: 13).

and instruction. Students, we will soon see, need “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9) at work, living within them, before they are able to understand this transcendent wisdom: “Everyone lacks this wisdom who is not taught in the school of Christ”.¹⁴² It is by the continued teaching of the risen and ascended Christ through his Spirit indwelling each student that we come to understand his words, and the Word he is together with the Father and the Spirit. Theologians need a true perspective on their role within the scope of this divine agency: their material is not of their own authoring, nor is the success—defined in terms of God’s purposes—of their method dependent on their own ability. It is God’s calling and equipping of teachers and his accompanying Spirit teaching inwardly that gives power and significance to the teaching of theology. The Trinity which God is, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, wants us to share in his wisdom, his goodness and his love. God accomplishes this, first, by giving us the gift of faith.

¹⁴² Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.25.

Chapter Four | The Students of the Divine Wisdom

“The things of God cannot be learned without the Spirit of God.”

— Ambrosiaster

Every teacher is first a student; every theologian is first a simple believer, learning the words of the catechism or the stories of the Bible. Thus, before we come to our lengthy treatment of teachers of theology in the next two chapters, we must first examine what kind of students is demanded by the unique knowledge being studied here—who one has to be to be able to learn from God. Divine wisdom, as we saw in the previous chapter, is unlike any natural or human wisdom. Various commentators exposed the danger of clinging to human wisdom as if it were the proper measure or criterion of God’s wisdom. In place of the distrust that this pride and presumption produces, one needs faith in God to learn to see the divine wisdom as it really is. This means that, unlike with the myriad realms of human knowledge, learning the truths of the divine wisdom requires certain spiritual powers in addition to the intellectual and moral qualities demanded.

To even begin the study of theology, then, in a way that recognizes its true character as the teaching and learning of divine wisdom, and not simply as the application of one’s cognitive powers to ancient texts, ecclesiastical dogmas and more or less human ideas, one needs to share in a spiritual life—and not any spiritual life, but the life of the Spirit. To put it simply, theology cannot take place without the Spirit of God our teacher. As we saw in the first chapter, the Holy Spirit “searches the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10) and brings them to our understanding by teaching us inwardly; he lives within us and moves our hearts and minds toward Christ who is our wisdom, crucified and risen. As Christ taught us in taking on human existence, in God’s economy the Spirit is also our teacher by making our hearts and minds capable of grasping the wisdom embodied in the Son. This chapter, then, will in many ways mirror the previous, but from the perspective of the person learning this wisdom rather than the wisdom itself.

The Holy Spirit Our Inner Teacher

The most basic principle in the learning of theology is the necessity of the Spirit. Without the presence of the Spirit in the human person, one will be restricted to judging all theological teaching by natural reason. As Ambrosiaster writes, “The things of God cannot

be learned without the Spirit of God”.¹ This is because the Spirit gives us a new spiritual understanding, a new light in which to see divine realities. In other words, the Spirit makes us ‘capable’ of the material in a way that we could never be by our own natural powers. “God revealed” his wisdom “to us through his Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:10), “through whom”, writes Ephrem the Syrian (c.306-373), “we are made able to comprehend his mysteries”.² Vermigli writes similarly, though much later, “After the reception of the Holy Spirit they were rendered most capable of heavenly things”.³

Regardless of the gifts or abilities of the theologian, if a student is trying to understand God’s works by his or her own native powers without the Spirit, they will fail to grasp them properly. Robert of Melun, commenting on Paul’s inability to speak to the Corinthians “as spiritual people” (1 Cor. 3:1), writes, “Not that he was unable to, but because the listeners themselves were not able. For he possessed within a great capacity for teaching, but he was impeded by an external cause such that he would not teach, since he did not have capable listeners”.⁴ The Spirit is necessary on both sides of the pedagogical relationship in this economy: students as well as their teachers need the Spirit’s inner working, enlightening and granting a new spiritual capability. The theologian does not, so to speak, bring God’s teaching to her students; rather, God is at work as much in the students as in and through the teacher.

It is appropriate that it is the Spirit who, in the economy, creates this new faculty in the spiritual person: just as no one knows a person’s thoughts except that person’s spirit, “no one knows the things of God except the Spirit who is from God” (1 Cor. 2:11). Without God’s inner teaching, we cannot correctly understand his truths, *supra naturam* as they are.⁵ We need a supernatural, divine principle of understanding: the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit teaching or revealing. Bullinger writes that “we cannot now understand divine things except by the revelation of God”, not meaning the original events of revelation, but a disclosure of their significance to our understanding: “The Lord, therefore, most rightly says in the gospel, ‘No one comes to me unless the Father

¹ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 27; quoted by Raban Maur, *PL*112: 25.

² Ephrem, *Comm.*, p.52.

³ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 47r.

⁴ Robert of Melun, *Qu. ep. Pauli*, p.182.

⁵ Cf. ch. 3, nn. 52, 57.

who sent me draws them. It is written in the Prophets, “And they will all be taught by God” (Jn. 6:44-45; cf. Is. 54:13).⁶

This ‘drawing’ of the Father and ‘teaching’ of the Spirit implies an ongoing agency; it is not as if the Spirit creates a new spiritual mind in us and we no longer have need of him. As we look through the Scriptures for the wisdom of Christ, we search in the light that the Spirit gives. For in the economy of the divine pedagogy, the Spirit first inspired these writings, and now enables us to understand them. Vermigli—in a striking anticipation of Vatican II—teaches that “the holy letters are to be understood in the same Spirit in which they were written”.⁷ This ‘understanding’ is the most characteristic work of the Spirit, according to Cajetan. “We have received... the Spirit who is from God, that we may know the things given us by God” (1 Cor. 2:12). Thus, “See the effect of the Spirit whom we receive: not urges, not madness, not an ecstasy of things we unknowingly suffer or do, but ‘that we may know’”.⁸ The Spirit is given us ‘that we may know’; knowledge is the fitting result of receiving the Spirit of God, who together with the Father and Son knows and sees all things. By the Spirit, we come to know the Son who became wisdom for us, and the Father who sent his Wisdom into the world ‘that we may know.’

The Non-Understanding of the ‘Natural Person’

In 1 Cor. 2:14-15, Paul contrasts the ψυχικός and the πνευματικός person. Paul’s ψυχικός, from ψυχή (‘soul’), is often translated “natural” (KJV, ESV, NASB; cf. NRSV, “unspiritual”) because English has no corresponding word ‘soulish’ or ‘soully,’ which would be the most literal rendering (cf. Vulg., *animalis*, from *anima*).⁹ This ‘natural person’ cannot understand τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ, “the things of the Spirit of God” because they look or seem like foolishness (v.14). Judging by her own natural powers, she cannot recognize spiritual realities as they are, but gets stuck on their surface appearance. A few verses later, Paul chastises the Corinthians for still being σαρκικοί (*carnales*), “fleshly” or “carnal” (3:3). For commentators, these two designations—‘natural’ or ‘animal,’ and ‘carnal’—indicate the same reality, the human person who is either lacking, or deficiently

⁶ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 23v-24r. Cf. Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 20r.

⁷ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 47r. Cf. Vatican Council II, “*Dei Verbum*” §12.

⁸ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 43v. Cf. John Webster, “Illumination,” in *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), p.53.

⁹ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 49r.

open to, the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ They thus lack the basic principle of theological understanding: the present, active Holy Spirit, living and teaching a person from within, “putting their souls to spiritual uses”.¹¹

There was some disagreement, however, about whether this ‘natural’ or ‘animal’ person does or does not have the Spirit living within. Hervé of Bourg-Dieu, for instance, argues, “They did not, therefore, perceive the knowledge of the Spirit of God who lived in them, and, with the Holy Spirit living in them, they were yet animal and not spiritual, since they were as yet unable to perceive, by knowledge, the Spirit their inhabitator”.¹² These ‘animal’ people operated with a kind of perceptual or cognitive blockage which prevented them from exercising their new spiritual understanding. As we will see, many commentators identified this with an ‘animal’ way of life, being directed by one’s *anima* rather than walking by the Spirit of God (cf. Rom. 8:4). When Paul denies that he can speak to the Corinthians “as to spiritual people” because they are instead “fleshly” (1 Cor. 3:1), Vermigli reads this as “hyperbole”, since, “because they were Christians, they could not altogether lack the Spirit”.¹³ However, for our leading exegetes, Aquinas and Calvin, this was not the case. Aquinas writes, in a phrase directly opposed to Vermigli, “The animal person lacks the Holy Spirit”.¹⁴ Calvin too, as if writing against Hervé (and the whole Latin tradition), argues that Paul “calls that person ‘animal,’ not, as is commonly accepted, who is, as they say, bound to base desires or his sensuality, but who is endowed with their natural faculties alone”. It thus “signifies a person left with, as they say, their pure natural qualities. For the soul is proper to nature, but the Spirit a supernatural gift”.¹⁵ Others had more complex readings of Paul’s distinctions,¹⁶ but for most, the ‘animal’ person lacked the Spirit, and therefore, followed their own base thoughts and impulses.

In the Greek tradition of commentary, Cyril of Alexandria (c.376-444) presents an interpretation that is almost identical to that of Calvin. The ψυχικὸς person “lives according to the flesh and does not yet have their mind enlightened through the Spirit,

¹⁰ Lombard, *PL*191: 1554; Hoffmeister, *In utr. ad Cor. Hom.*, p.34.

¹¹ Cf. Cajetan, ch. 1, n. 64.

¹² Hervé, *PL*181: 845.

¹³ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 62v.

¹⁴ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.3.115. Cf. Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.153.

¹⁵ Calvin, *CO*49: 343.

¹⁶ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 78.

but only possesses the innate, human understanding which the Creator implanted in every soul".¹⁷ Chrysostom, however, recognizes the inevitable waywardness of this state *in puris naturalibus*. This is an impossible condition, because it is only good where one sees one's natural powers as dependent on God—and therefore, does not live *in puris naturalibus*. For the person without the Spirit cannot, by definition, perceive this. Thus, the ψυχικὸς "ascribes everything to unfeeling reasoning, and does not think they need any help from above, which is stupidity. For God gave [human wisdom] that one would learn and receive what comes from him, not so that one would think himself sufficient unto himself".¹⁸

Theophylact takes Chrysostom's insights further to highlight the intellectual blindness that occurs as a result of self-reliance. Not only does the natural person not look for God's help, but she also "does not want to take anything in faith, but considers everything without proof as foolishness". This is, in a sense, 'natural,' since "the soul is concerned with the administration of nature. Yet just as physical eyes, very good and useful though they may be, are not strong enough to see without light, so also the soul, made capable of the Holy Spirit, cannot see divine things without him".¹⁹ This reliance on oneself and one's own judgment is further compounded by moral-spiritual failings which cloud the mind. For, Chrysostom argues, "Christ rightly says, 'the one who does bad deeds does not come toward the light' (Jn. 3:20), and the impure life hinders high teachings, not letting the clear-sightedness of the understanding appear".²⁰ Moral disarray prevents the understanding from operating properly; sin, to use a much later idiom, has negative noetic effects.

The Latin tradition would mainly follow this reading of animality as moral debasement, rather than what could be called Calvin and Cyril's 'pure nature' interpretation. Thus, for Sedulius Scottus, the person "who does not possess the Spirit of God is animal, living in animal behaviour, seeking solely what benefits the flesh. For the animal has a soul, but not understanding, and so 'does not perceive the things of the Spirit of God' (1 Cor. 2:14), that is, spiritual things, what the Spirit teaches".²¹ Lacking the

¹⁷ Cyril of Alexandria, PG74: 257.

¹⁸ Chrysostom, *Hom.* 7.4, PG61: 60; quoted by John of Damascus, PG95: 588.

¹⁹ Theophylact, PG124: 596.

²⁰ Chrysostom, *Hom.* 8.2, PG61: 69.

²¹ Sedulius, PL103: 133.

Spirit living within, the animal person lives just like the animals (*ritu animalium vivit*), not knowing that there are higher, spiritual realities that might bring a more than fleshly happiness.

The Gloss, quoting Atto of Vercelli, takes this further to argue that *animalis* refers to “a life which ‘is carried along by the dissolute lust’ of its soul, which the driver does not contain within the naturally ordained boundaries of the soul because ‘he has not submitted himself to be ruled by God.’ But the soul’s understanding is called animal when it judges God according to a bodily fantasy or the letter of the law or physical reason”.²² The Gloss thus differentiates two kinds of animality, one of ‘life’ and another of ‘understanding,’ and explicates each according to ancient traditions. A person living an animal life is like a chariot driver failing to contain his unruly horse, as in Plato’s allegory;²³ and a person who is animal in understanding thinks of God, contrary to the constant warnings of the Fathers, as if he were a body like us. On this latter, Hugh of St. Cher writes that the animal person “thinks of God in a fleshly way, imagining those things she sees in bodies to be in God”.²⁴

Aquinas moves little beyond the Gloss at this point. He cites its two phrases, on ‘life’ and ‘understanding,’ separately, and relates the former to the “power of the appetite” and the latter to the “power of apprehension”, both of which are corrupted by this animal life.²⁵ Denis the Carthusian similarly sees this animal state as debilitating the faculties of the human soul. The animal person, for him, is “fleshly and vice-filled, whose affections and understanding are detained in sensible realities”. He does not “delight” in spiritual things “because of an infection of his inner taste”; he is “like a feverish person” who cannot taste honey’s sweetness because of the infection.²⁶ Their judgment is impeded by such a condition.²⁷ Thus, Calvin argued along these lines that the false teachers were able to make headway with the Corinthians by catering to their defective tastes. Since the Corinthians, Calvin writes, “had more of an appetite for clever than fruitful teaching, the gospel had no taste: desirous of new things, Christ had grown old....

²² Gloss, col. 213; quoted by Lombard, *PL*191: 1552; Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.3.112; the Gloss quoting Atto of Vercelli, *PL*134: 312.

²³ Plato, *Phaedrus* 246a–254e.

²⁴ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, ad. litt., fol. 78r.

²⁵ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.3.112.

²⁶ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 39v.

²⁷ Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.190.

Therefore, to serve the Corinthian palate, they added seasoning to their preaching by which the true flavour of the gospel was corrupted”.²⁸ Rather than seeking to correct the debility of their students’ perception, the false teachers adjusted their teaching to make it seem acceptable. They prepared bad food for bad taste. This is different, let us remember, than the way good food can be mashed to make it edible for infants; in that case, the teachers provide true teaching, but at a small and manageable level.²⁹

In the Reformation, both Protestant and Catholic commentators continued to derive an understanding of the *homo animalis* from the nature of the soul, the *anima*. Musculus, for instance, regards Paul as “calling a ψυχικόν person ‘animal’ from the better part of the person, namely, the soul, to warn that the whole person is unfit to embrace spiritual things”. If the soul is incapable of spiritual things, then the body much more so. Interestingly, however, he sees this as relating not to “the perception which occurs in the understanding” but “the reception and approval which occurs in the affections”.³⁰ For Musculus, it is most of all the affections which block the way to sound understanding. A little later he writes, “For the grasp of spiritual teaching requires a clear and pure soul which is not confused by fleshly affections”.³¹ Carnal thoughts upset the clarity that the mind needs to properly receive and approve, or judge, the truth of spiritual teaching.

Others turned increasingly in the direction of Calvin’s reading, present already in the Greek tradition via Cyril, Chrysostom and Theophylact. Vermigli comes quite close to the Genevan Reformer’s view in saying that the ‘animal person’ “knows and acts from his own soul in things both higher and lower” than him. As a result, “he bears to believe nothing except insofar as it is demonstrated to him by reasons, as the one who uses only the light inborn to him and natural prudence”. Such a person is “neither renewed nor yet restored by the Spirit of Christ”.³² This focus on the ‘natural’ powers of the soul would be even more pronounced in the Catholic commentators of the period. The Augustinian Hoffmeister, similarly to Vermigli, says the ‘animal person’ “relies on his thoughts alone and his understanding alone, and does not want to accept anything by faith and belief,

²⁸ Calvin, *argumentum*, CO49: 299.

²⁹ Cf. ch. 3, n. 85 above.

³⁰ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 70.

³¹ *Ibid.*, col. 81.

³² Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 49r-v.

and considers anything which cannot be proved by reason stupid”.³³ Cajetan says a person “is called animal from the soul which, indeed, only follows those things to which the powers of the soul extend; that is, which only follows the natural light of reason”.³⁴ In line, then, with the ‘natural’ character of human wisdom,³⁵ the ‘natural’ person only relies on what is accessible within the bounds of nature, perceptible to one’s own inborn powers of reason. On the other hand, Cajetan’s fellow Dominican Catharinus argues, “For a human being, inasmuch as she is a human being, when she is first born is without the grace of God and therefore is fleshly in her own nature, or rather, according to the Scriptures, is flesh and is led by its affections, and knows nothing divine, nor is there war between the flesh and the spirit”.³⁶ Of course, Catharinus is not denying the goodness of created human nature, but he recognizes that human beings are born at a particular point in the οἰκονομία; we live in the time *post peccatum*, “after sin”.³⁷

Because of our place in the history of salvation, the ‘animal’ or ‘natural’ person is always in a state requiring salvation; he is always going to rely on his own powers rather than seeking God’s help. In reference to Paul’s verse, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise” (1 Cor. 1:19; cf. Is. 29:14), Calvin writes that “the Lord tended to punish the arrogance of those who wanted to profess themselves guides, by their own powers, of themselves and others”.³⁸ The ‘natural person’ does not want to humble themselves to learn from God, but wishes to measure God by their own reason and understanding of the world. They put their faith in themselves, rather than in the God who made them. Thus, as Atto of Vercelli says, “Whoever, therefore, places their hope in a human being is correctly called fleshly, and conversely whoever, spurning human help, hopes for assistance from God is rightly called spiritual, since God, who lives in them, is spirit”.³⁹ There is, to recall the beginning of the chapter, an utterly basic need for the Spirit before one can start to understand the things of God. The distrust produced by natural reason must be overcome by the light of faith before reason can perform its proper,

³³ Hoffmeister, *In utr. ad Cor. Hom.*, p.28.

³⁴ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 44r.

³⁵ See chapter three, “The Qualities of Human Wisdom.”

³⁶ Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.154.

³⁷ Cf. Olivi, ch. 2, n. 18.

³⁸ Calvin, CO49: 323.

³⁹ Atto of Vercelli, PL134: 315.

handmaidenly service. But before we come to that point, we should attempt to specify more closely the character of the natural person's sinfulness.

Obstacles to Spiritual Understanding

The natural person trusts in themselves and their own powers, rather than in what God has revealed. This is the general obstacle thrown up by sin to correctly perceiving God's truth, but can one diagnose it further? What sin does this basic attitude represent, and what other sins can it give birth to? For many in the tradition, this self-reliance and rejection of divine teaching is a fatal form of pride, though it can take more specific forms like arrogance and presumption. This basic sinfulness also brings other, especially socially-destructive sins into being, like envy, contentiousness and willful ignorance. These all trouble the cognitive faculties, such that the haze of sinful affections makes it difficult for the understanding to perceive anything, and especially anything spiritual, as it really is. They also trouble the unity of the Church, since each relies on themselves or their own judgment of others to ascertain true knowledge, instead of looking together to the God who gently instructs humble hearts.

The first and most significant sin commentators identify as detrimental to clear perception of divine reality is pride, something closely tied to wealth. The effect of this sin is why, Chrysostom argues, Paul says that God chose "not many powerful, not many noble" (1 Cor. 1:26): "For these also are filled with pride. And nothing is so useless in terms of the accurate knowledge of God as arrogance and", he adds, "being nailed down to wealth", which "blocks one's ears with a mass of concerns".⁴⁰ Hervé of Bourg-Dieu, in the mid-twelfth century, writes similarly, commenting on the same verse. "For in the pride of the wisdom of this age", he begins, "many disdain being subject to the wisdom of God. Hardly any people like this can be led to faith.... For their minds are blinded by riches and wealth, and luxury or pride, and surrounded by vices, they are unable to see virtues. And they judge the simplicity of Holy Scripture not from the majesty of its meanings but from the worthlessness of its words".⁴¹

Again, pride and the attachments of wealth create a debilitating cognitive condition in which one judges only by appearances and not by reality. Tied to fleshly and

⁴⁰ Chrysostom, *Hom.* 5.1, PG61: 40.

⁴¹ Hervé, *PL*181: 828.

sensual things, the mind is not able to perceive a worth that is not immediately and materially tangible. Putting so much stock in the things that bring pride in the eyes of the world, they arrogantly disdain being subject to the foolish-looking wisdom of God, and thus, cannot perceive its—or rather, *his*—presence in the simple words of Scripture. In Nicholas of Lyra’s phrase, they have their minds “pressed down” or “curved back” toward sensible things.⁴² It is the Spirit’s work, Aquinas teaches, to unhinge our tight grip on what we can perceive with our physical eyes by “kindling the affections to love spiritual goods, disdaining sensible goods”.⁴³ As the Spirit undoes our vices and brings us to love what we should, our cognitive powers become capable for the first time of perceiving the divine wisdom; our minds are no longer ‘pressed down’ or ‘curved back,’ but are liberated for the fullness of truth.

In 1 Cor. 4:8-13, Paul launches into a devastating ironic tirade in which he blasts the pride of the Corinthians, just after reminding them that all they have is grace: “What do you have that you did not receive?” (v.7a). In Paul’s rhetoric, Aquinas discerns four species of pride. The first is thinking that what one has, one does not have from God: “Why do you boast as if you did not receive it?” (v.7b); the second, to think they have received it by their own merits; the third, boasting in what one does not in fact possess: “You are already full, you have already become rich!” (v.8a); and the fourth, despising others and wanting to be viewed separately: “You are reigning without us!” (v.8b).⁴⁴ In each of these forms of pride, a person is far from seeing themselves and the world as they are; instead, their sin projects a deceptive appearance, contemplating the world in light of its own vices rather than in the true light of the Spirit. In the economy of the teaching and learning of theology, everything that makes it possible is God’s gift.⁴⁵ But God often chooses to give us his gifts in forms that are not appealing to human pride—the most stunning and significant example, of course, being the salvation gained on the old rugged cross. God does this intentionally to extract the poison of arrogance and presumption from our hearts and to replace it with humility. “But God chose the foolish things of the world... so that no flesh may boast before him” (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

⁴² Nicholas of Lyra, col. 213, 214.

⁴³ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.3.113.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.2.207.

⁴⁵ Cf. Calvin, ch. 5, n. 29.

Before God enlightens us to understand his wisdom, he first bows us to a humility that is happy to receive God's gifts in what the world would find less than desirable guises. And this enlightening and this humbling are both his gifts. For Calvin, "God only lets infants into his school. Therefore, those who, content with the poor preaching of the cross, have absolutely no desire for Christ under an enchanted form are at last capable of heavenly wisdom. Thus, the teaching of the gospel ought to be accommodated to this purpose in order that the faithful may be dragged away from all arrogance and highmindedness".⁴⁶ Pride causes us to desire a Christ who is 'under an enchanted form,' as if under a spell, and therefore bearing a fictional and deceptive appearance. But God chose to save us by a crucified and bloody Saviour and to announce him by a poor and simple preaching. Vermigli relates this to those students who "very frequently labour in vanity, favouring the novelty of teachers more than is due and valuing teaching based on the grandeur and eloquence of the teacher".⁴⁷ This 'vanity' disappears as the Spirit 'kindles the affections to love' this poor Jesus. Then we will be able to enter God's school and learn from his theologians, however poorly spoken or simple.

In no longer relying on our own perceptions and judgments of the crucified Christ, we give up our own presumptions, a deadly byproduct of pride. We stop 'measuring' and prejudging God by our own so-called wisdom and, in humility, ask to learn from his true wisdom. Cajetan links presumption especially with the tendency to 'measure' God by the natural world. This "presumption of human beings to extend propositions and means beyond their proportional limits begets opposition to the truth of Christian faith".⁴⁸ This measuring presumes beforehand that God ought to be thought of according to the same criteria by which the creation is conceived, as if he were a creature. Erasmus sees this same effect arising from those who are "proud in the knowledge of visible things and led by human affections". They "believe only what they have discovered by experience or what is justified by human reasons".⁴⁹ In their presumption, they take their knowledge of the sensible, material world as the sole viable measure of all the knowledge there could be; they rule out God beforehand, with the little and glorious human minds God has given us. Even those who are making progress in the knowledge of God can operate with

⁴⁶ Calvin, *CO49*: 321.

⁴⁷ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 75r.

⁴⁸ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 41v.

⁴⁹ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 865-66; quoted by Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.190.

presumption, and this presuming to know is a closure upon oneself, a sickly blocking of one's ears in place of opening them to the divine teacher. For this reason, there is no worse sin for the student of theology than presumption, this subspecies of pride.⁵⁰

In addition to pride, in its various forms, there is also the sin of envy. In 1 Cor. 3:3, Paul writes, "For where there is jealousy and controversy among you, are you not fleshly?" This jealousy, like pride, is a way of cutting oneself off from others. In pride, one thinks oneself better than others, while in jealousy, Aquinas writes, one "is saddened by another's good". Jealousy gives rise to controversy because when one sees that another has something good, one "strives to promote oneself" rather than being happy for that other person, as one does when one loves and thereby brings peace. Aquinas presents a second, insightful analysis. Jealousy, he argues, only has a place among "fleshly" people who are attracted to corporeal goods. This kind of goods cannot be simultaneously possessed by more than one person—at least not intact. Spiritual goods, on the other hand, the kind of goods the Spirit moves us to love, can be possessed by multiple people at once, and "therefore the good of one is not an obstacle to the good of another".⁵¹ Indeed, Nicholas of Lyra argues that among spiritual people, a spiritual good is possessed by many "more perfectly than by one person" alone.⁵²

Spiritual wisdom, as a result, can be generously shared among spiritual people without jealousy or controversy based on one's desire to appear better than another. Aquinas cites Wis. 7:13 here: "I communicate without envy." Conversely, this also means that a good teacher will not withhold teaching from students out of envy, but only due to incapacity.⁵³ If a student is still proud and envious, and therefore insufficiently open to the Spirit who enlightens our minds, a good teacher will withhold higher and deeper matters from them. A teacher must first see that a student has come to love the cross of Christ, and has been changed by it, before they can share higher or deeper matters with them.

So envy, and the controversy and factions that result from it, "impedes the knowledge of spiritual things".⁵⁴ Instead of an open communication of God's wisdom, an

⁵⁰ Cf. Bonaventure, *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus sancti* 8.1 (*Opera omnia*, 5: 494).

⁵¹ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.1.128-29.

⁵² Nicholas of Lyra, col. 215-16.

⁵³ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.1.125.

⁵⁴ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 81.

envious person blocks both himself and others from knowledge of it: himself, because he is 'fleshly' and therefore unable to perceive it truly, and others, because whatever he could understand of this wisdom he would keep to himself in fear that others might surpass him. In contrast, "the spiritual affections lack envy", writes Cajetan, "since they take joy that a good is common to many".⁵⁵ We should be happy about the advances of others, since they will then be able to communicate their new understanding to us in turn, and we can receive their teaching as a gift of God rather than a source of insecurity; we do not have to live in fear that their rightness will mean our wrongness.

Finally, there is the vice of ignorance, meaning not simply a neutral state of not knowing but one that is morally culpable. It is Calvin, interestingly, who provides an insightful moral theology of ignorance:

I respond that ignorance is twofold. There is one which proceeds from jealousy without consideration and does not straightforwardly reject the good but only does so because it thinks it evil. Yet no one so sins in ignorance without at the same time being guilty before God of a bad conscience, since it is always mixed up with hypocrisy, or pride, or contempt; sometimes, however, the judgment and all the intelligence of the human mind are so suffocated that nothing but bare ignorance appears, not only to others, but even to themselves.... There is another species of ignorance which is more similar to insanity and vertigo than mere ignorance, for those who willingly rise up against God are like frenetics who seeing do not see. And it is certainly to be held that faithlessness is always blind, but this is the difference: sometimes blindness covers up evil so that a person, as if senseless, lacks all understanding of their own evil. This takes place in those who, as they say, with good intention—that is, foolish imagining—deceive themselves; meanwhile, evil prevails so that, while conscience protests, a person rushes in a kind of madness into great sin.⁵⁶

Ignorance, for Calvin, is tied to the other vices as well as to cognitive blindness. In the first kind, the unknowing is born of jealousy. Like Aquinas, Calvin sees it leading to controversies, with ambition at its root.⁵⁷ With jealousy, one is unable to recognize truth as truth when it comes from another person's mouth; one is inhibited from admitting the correctness of another's speech because another's good is our evil, and thus, one is left in a state of ignorance. This always, Calvin argues, comes mixed with elements of pride. The second kind, which could be called a willful ignorance, is a sort of frenzied or mad

⁵⁵ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 44r.

⁵⁶ Calvin, *CO49*: 338-39.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, col. 348. Cf. n. 51 above.

blindness that comes from open opposition to God. Living in resistance to God, and thus cut off from the source of all good, one is left unable to discern the evil one is doing as the evil it is.

All of these vices—pride, envy and ignorance, and their manifestations—make the ‘animal’ or ‘fleshly’ person unable to perceive the divine wisdom as true wisdom. To these sinful eyes, the crucified and risen Christ necessarily looks like stupidity. Thus, before a student can make a proper beginning in the study of theology, she needs the Spirit to clear her heart of the sinful inner movements that more or less covertly block her line of sight. This new life of the Spirit will allow her to walk not “in line with human affections” but “in line with divine rules”.⁵⁸ Free from the deceptive impulses of all-too-human affections for fleshly and material realities, she will become capable of seeing the formerly imperceptible truth of the gospel. As we saw above, “the grasp of spiritual teaching requires a clear and pure soul which is not confused by fleshly affections”.⁵⁹ This ‘clarity’ and ‘purity’ is a work of the Spirit who, as Aquinas tells us, “kindles the affections to love spiritual goods”,⁶⁰ especially that spiritual Good who was nailed to a bare and hasty Roman cross for the forgiveness of our pride, envy and ignorance. With a ‘clear and pure soul,’ we will be able to recognize in this One “the Lord of glory” so unrecognizable to the rulers of this age (1 Cor. 2:8). But to receive this inner work of the Spirit, one must be turned from his natural life to a new, spiritual life; in other words, one needs conversion.

New Life in the Spirit

The first step in the learning of theology is conversion, the birth of faith in the human soul. In conversion, a person sees for the first time their sin and their salvation in Christ crucified. But of course, one does not come to this point in the same way that one comes to human wisdom. It is not the usual processes of reasoning that bring a person to faith; there must be an inner working of the Spirit, moving the mind to believe. As the Gloss says, this wisdom is “hidden in a mystery” (1 Cor. 2:7) “since it is not in words, but in power; not comprehensible by human reason, but believable by the efficacy of the

⁵⁸ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 44r.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Musculus*, n. 31 above.

⁶⁰ Cf. n. 43 above.

Spirit”.⁶¹ The Spirit brings people to faith by coordinating his inner work with outer works of preaching and miracles. Thus, from the beginning of a student’s journey toward knowing God, the Spirit is exercising an *oikonomia* which combines inward spiritual effects with outward bodily actions, and graced receptive students with graced expressive teachers. This economy, which we will see in more detail in chapters five through seven, both precedes and will outlast a student’s—and teacher’s—life.

The outer work of miracles are an aid to the second outer work of preaching, sometimes following it and sometimes preceding it (Mk. 16:20; Acts 3:12). Most of the reflection on their interconnection came from commentators in response to Paul’s claim that “my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in a demonstration of power and of the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:4). For the majority of the tradition, this ‘demonstration’ referred either to miracles or the bestowal of spiritual power on preaching. Aquinas and Calvin included both, but understood the Spirit’s work more expansively. Aquinas, for instance, juxtaposes two sets of the Spirit’s actions: on the one hand, the gifts of the Spirit (Acts 10:44) and the working of miracles (Mk. 16:20; Gal. 3:5), and on the other, the “sublimity and abundance of teaching” that comes by speaking “by the Spirit” (2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Cor. 4:13) and the confirmation of this teaching in a virtuous way of life (1 Thess. 2:10).⁶² Thus, miracles and preaching are part of a broader economy involving charismatic gifts and moral-spiritual renewal.

Calvin is more explicit about this larger frame. Although many restrict this ‘demonstration’ to miracles, he notes, he understands it instead as “the hand of God powerfully stretching out in every way through the apostle”. Our sloth is such that we usually get stuck on the “lower tools”, the human instruments, through which God works, but in Paul, since he made use of no human or worldly help, God’s power was more conspicuous.⁶³ Here one sees a theme that emerges also in Catharinus: one must look beyond the outer ‘tools’ to the divine hand at work in them. Teachers can aid this effort of perception on their students’ part by teaching in a certain way, making themselves translucent to the divine light in their simplicity and lack of external and worldly aids.⁶⁴ Calvin as well as Aquinas, then, place the working of miracles within the larger *oikonomia*

⁶¹ Gloss, cols. 209-10.

⁶² Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.1.78.

⁶³ Calvin, *CO49*: 335.

⁶⁴ Cf. Calvin, ch. 6, n. 32.

of God's use of the apostle 'in every way.' The inward birthing of faith through the preached word, and miracles as a confirmation of that word, are but two moments in the Spirit's teaching of humanity unto salvation, which is to say, unto knowing him.

For most of the tradition, miracles have a twofold function: first, they confirm the teaching of the gospel; second, and relatedly, they distinguish the ministers of this gospel from others, whether false apostles or philosophers. Thus, Haymo of Auxerre writes in Paul's voice that "what I teach and preach in words, I reinforce and show to be true by miracles, which your philosophers and false apostles are not able to do".⁶⁵ Atto of Vercelli and Nicholas of Lyra focus especially on the first function of miracles as confirmation.⁶⁶ Pseudo-Jerome emphasizes the second, namely that in preaching the gospel, Paul "did not want to make use of disputations with them since the Corinthians were dialecticians, lest it also seem to them like some new philosophy, but instead he demonstrated miracles and great works to them".⁶⁷ By these miracles, which burst the limits of nature and natural reason, the apostle distinguished the gospel teaching from philosophy, for the logicians had no divine authority behind their knowledge. It is Cajetan, most interestingly, who argues that these miracles are "proper" (*propria*) to the kingdom of heaven; they clearly mark out those who teach "by word alone" from the teachers of the kingdom, who preach "by word and the power of miracles".⁶⁸ They are a 'demonstration' of the Spirit's power at work in them, although it is not so much the preacher demonstrating the Spirit's authority as the Spirit demonstrating his authority through the working of miracles. This "showing of the Holy Spirit", Primaticci writes, occurs in these signs, which "God works through us by the Holy Spirit".⁶⁹ This objective 'showing' or 'demonstration' of the Spirit's power, however, requires perception.

Earlier, we saw how one of the features of the 'animal' person is their attachment to sensible realities. They cannot yet taste the goodness of spiritual things because their affections are tied to what they can see. For Catharinus, miracles serve these 'weaker' persons. "Signs and wonders", he writes, "were added for the weaker ones, in order that those who could not grasp the truth of the gospel by the pure word would be bound to

⁶⁵ Haymo, *PL*117: 519.

⁶⁶ Atto, *PL*134: 306; Nicholas of Lyra, col. 209.

⁶⁷ Ps.-Jerome, *PL*30: 722.

⁶⁸ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 47r.

⁶⁹ Primaticci, *Lit. exp. ep. Pauli*, fol. 84r.

embrace faith with miracles produced before their eyes”.⁷⁰ Those who could not yet understand the gospel intellectually could see its spiritual power in the healing of bodies, and so come to faith. Miracles, as opposed to the apparent foolishness of the cross, are visibly great works (*magnalia*). It is interesting, then, that Catharinus reads 1 Cor. 2:2, about Paul’s decision to know nothing but Christ crucified, as indicating Paul’s ‘conformation’ to the cross of Christ, his humility and bearing the marks of Jesus in his body.⁷¹ The wisdom of this way of life would not be perceptible to Catharinus’ ‘weaker’ persons, but only to those who already have faith in and love for the crucified Jesus. In an important way, then, Catharinus reads different elements of the Spirit’s οἰκονομία as aimed at different levels of recipients. Miracles and preaching are both outward graces accompanied by inward motions of the Spirit, but they reach students of varying spiritual needs.

This inward grace was especially associated with the work of preaching. In the act of preaching, the Spirit enlightens or teaches the heart of the listener and brings faith to life there. This interior effect, Nicholas of Amiens reminds us, is a function of the Spirit’s lordship. The Spirit dwells in us as in his temple, as in his “family home”, in Aquinas’ phrase.⁷² He thus has the authority to make use of its various faculties as his own, whether to “incline our wills toward good things on account of his mercy or toward bad things on account of our merits”. God’s teaching of our hearts, by which the outward work of preaching has its effect, is an interior moving of our hearts’ own movement of understanding, as “the Holy Spirit by his authority moves the spirit”, such that “by him teaching, they are taught”.⁷³ This authoritative moving of the Spirit is a guarantee of faith’s divine source. Paul did not preach in “persuasive words of wisdom, but in a demonstration of power and of the Spirit” specifically “so that your faith would not be in the wisdom of human beings but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:4-5). Aquinas takes this to mean “that faith would rely on divine power, and so be unable to fail. ‘I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to every believer’ (Rom. 1:16)”.⁷⁴ The Spirit’s lordly moving of our hearts to faith is a movement of divine power,

⁷⁰ Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.140.

⁷¹ Cf. ch. 3, n. 139.

⁷² Cf. ch. 1, n. 66.

⁷³ Nicholas of Amiens, *Comm. Porr.*, pp.34-35.

⁷⁴ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.1.79.

and therefore, an assurance of the salvation which is the goal of the whole divine οἰκονομία.

In the present, this birth of faith is a sign of the Spirit's activity. For, as Bullinger writes, "a human being cannot grant faith. Faith is a gift of God".⁷⁵ In the economy, this is a work assigned to God our teacher alone. The heart, the place of faith, is inaccessible to other human beings; for "it is only God who can work in a human heart".⁷⁶ We can only do the external work of preaching, and need God to give it its interior, divine effect. Hugh of St. Cher gives a spiritual reading of conversion along these lines. "Christ", Hugh writes, "enters into the sheepfold by himself, that is, into human hearts.... Christ alone preaches himself, that is, shows himself to human hearts. For this reason Matt. 23:10 says, 'Your teacher is one,' that in preaching himself he shows him who is preached. And so he preaches himself in one way and we preach him in another".⁷⁷ Unless Christ enters the 'sheepfold' of our students' hearts, our preaching fails to achieve its proper, intended end. In the economy, we are, according to Olivi, supposed to "speak in such a way that the Spirit of God touches their hearts, and that in the words themselves and the way they are spoken his power and fragrance echoes out".⁷⁸ A teacher does not have it in her authority to cause faith to come to life in her hearers, but she can ensure she is not an obstacle to this event by letting the power of God work through her words, rather than drawing attention to the words themselves. In this way, the Spirit moves unhindered and transforms the human heart from an 'animal' to a new, spiritual state.

This transformation is, because divine, immeasurably effective and lasting. The Spirit's movement of our hearts is no momentary persuasion but an eternal and saving conviction. Sebastian Meyer writes that the 'demonstration' of the Spirit is "a power effective beyond measure at overcoming and persuading human souls about those spiritual and divine realities which least fall within our sense, in order that they may possess a completely certain faith".⁷⁹ This lasting and indubitable persuasion is an effect of a divine act comparable to the first work of creation. Thus, Vermigli writes beautifully, "The Word of God has the greatest effectiveness in moving human hearts, nor is this

⁷⁵ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 28r.

⁷⁶ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 44v.

⁷⁷ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, exp. gloss., fol. 73v.

⁷⁸ Olivi, *Postil.*, pp.359-60.

⁷⁹ Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 11v.

surprising, since, summoned by it, all creatures came forth out of nothing”.⁸⁰ By the inward moving of the Spirit, God causes a new thing to come into being: “Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert” (Is. 43:19 ESV). And “if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation!” (2 Cor. 5:17). When the Spirit touches our hearts, making use of the Word of God “as an instrument or key”,⁸¹ he performs a transformation that, like the Word of God itself, “stands forever” (Is. 40:8). “This persuasion”, Claude Guillaud contends, “is nothing like the decorations of the rhetoricians. The word of truth is vigorous, living, potent, and in this measure transforms the human breast. The persuasion of the rhetoricians briefly strokes the ears of their hearers, but the Word of God remains, sets in the sting, holds and changes around”.⁸² The words of the divine wisdom, when spoken to the heart by the Spirit, have the power to change a person not just for a time but for eternity.

This forceful spiritual newness expresses itself in a moral-spiritual transformation of the human person. Faith is accompanied by all the other interior and exterior motions in which God brings one to share in a new life “according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4-5). In the ministry of preaching, writes Georg Maior, “the Holy Spirit is present, bending the hearts of hearers to repentance, kindling in them, through the Word of God, a new light, faith, fear, love and invocation of God and movements conformed to God, and beginning a new life and righteousness”.⁸³ All of these elements make up the new life of the spiritual person. For Calvin, this divine power is not alluring or gently persuasive like human wisdom; rather, “the Word of the Lord compels us by his majesty, as if by a violent impulse, to obey him”.⁸⁴ This supremely effective divine Word thus takes the form, in Calvin’s thought, of force, compelling those who do not yet know the gospel into obedience. Musculus’ reflections are more in line with Maior. He sees the Spirit introducing a whole set of spiritual motions and powers into the soul beyond ‘obedience.’ Commenting on what “God revealed to us through the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:10), Musculus writes:

⁸⁰ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 41r. Cf. idem, fol. 22r.

⁸¹ Cf. Maior, ch. 5, n. 67.

⁸² Guillaud, *Coll.*, fol. 92v.

⁸³ Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 52v.

⁸⁴ Calvin, CO49: 335.

[T]he apostle is speaking of a true and living knowledge of the will of God, not that which is had by training in the Scriptures alone, without singular revelation, which is more an opinion lasting for a time, uncertain and fluctuating, than certain knowledge, which is why it is ineffective and does not change the heart nor renew one's life, and brings neither faith nor love of God or neighbour nor fear of God, while that knowledge which is by God's revelation, that is, through the breathing of the Holy Spirit, brings all these things with it. Then, to training in the Scriptures is joined diligence in prayer, is joined humility of soul, is joined the desire for righteousness. For the Spirit of God comes to rest upon the humble and those who fear God.⁸⁵

Musculus speaks here of training in the Scriptures, but the same considerations apply to preaching. The external work of preaching, or reading the Scriptures, is incomplete in the economy without God's internal effecting of new spiritual life, the 'breathing of the Holy Spirit.' The Spirit creates new movements in the spiritual persons, motions like prayer, humility and a desire for righteousness. Thus, the Spirit makes the spiritual person his own home, and disposes of the heart and mind of that person as he wills. Making use of the Word of God, whether in its written or preached form, and the miracles he works through his ministers, the Spirit oversees his economy, bringing new members in the body of Christ, the Church.

Faith and Christ: The Foundation of Theological Practice

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 3, compares himself to an architect who, in preaching the gospel, laid a solid foundation. God used his outer work to effect an inner renewal, a new spiritual building which commentators variously identified as teachings about Christ, faith in Christ or Christ himself. All of these three are, more or less, different ways of viewing the same reality: the heart moved by the Spirit to know and place its faith in Christ, and the Christ who dwells there. It is this dwelling of Christ in our hearts by faith (cf. Eph. 3:17) that makes one spiritual rather than natural or fleshly, and thus able to understand theology properly. While there are some observable lineages in the history of exegesis here, they are not deterministic; the Thomist reading is picked up by some Reformers, while Cajetan and Calvin together take a different line. By far the minority reading is that of the foundation as teachings. Maior refers to it as "the true articles of Christian teaching

⁸⁵ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 65-66.

and faith”;⁸⁶ Catharinus, the “principles of faith”.⁸⁷ Denis the Carthusian, slightly earlier, offers “fundamental teaching” or “the initial preaching” alongside the other two interpretations of faith and Christ himself.⁸⁸

In the medieval period, most understood the foundation as the second option: faith in Christ, a faith that brings forth the virtue of love. The Gloss, for instance, took up a saying of Augustine that this “faith in Christ, the faith of Christian grace, that is, that faith which works through love (cf. Gal. 5:6), is set as a foundation and lets no one perish”.⁸⁹ With this saying clearly in mind, Robert of Melun writes that by this “faith in Christ” God inspires loves for him in those who receive it and no one can perish in whom it resides.⁹⁰ This is the same reality that Aquinas refers to as “faith formed in the heart” (although he also thinks the foundation could be “the faith founded and preached by the apostles”).⁹¹

But it received more development, interestingly, from Protestant commentators in the Reformation. Konrad Pellikan writes, “Yet that faith, if it is legitimate and true, is not lazy but through love works the works of God”.⁹² Thus, while it is born in the heart, inaccessible to others and, often, oneself, faith bears outward fruit, the ‘works of God’ through which love is shown to God and neighbour. Likewise Vermigli writes that “love bursts out of true and effective faith. For we immediately love the evident good now possessed by faith. And since good works are perpetual companions of love (for they are always associated) it happens that a genuine and proper faith is never empty of good works. And so we conclude that faith is the mother of love, and from these two conjoined things hope goes out”.⁹³ As we saw earlier with Aquinas, the Spirit “kindles the affections to love spiritual goods”,⁹⁴ which Vermigli here calls the ‘evident good,’ alluding to the definition of faith in Heb. 11:1. When we have faith in our highest good, God, we break out in love for him because of his goodness: “We love because he first loved us” (1 Jn. 4:19). And most importantly for our purposes, “Christ is first wisdom for us when we

⁸⁶ Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 37r.

⁸⁷ Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.155.

⁸⁸ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 40v.

⁸⁹ Augustine, *f. et op.* 16.27; quoted by Gloss, col. 218. Cf. Primateci, *Lit. exp. ep. Pauli*, fol. 87v.

⁹⁰ Robert of Melun, *Qu. ep. Pauli*, pp.183-84.

⁹¹ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.2.161.

⁹² Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.194.

⁹³ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 13r.

⁹⁴ Cf. n. 43 above.

believe”.⁹⁵ As we saw in the first chapter, for the tradition stretching from Chrysostom through Aquinas, Christ becomes wisdom for us in the economy by ‘making us wise,’ that is, by bringing faith in Christ to life in our hearts,⁹⁶ and so causing us to love the crucified and risen Jesus and hope in the salvation he brings. In this sense, faith in Christ is the ‘foundation’ of our new spiritual life because it grounds us in Christ and him crucified.

Another tradition, let us recall, understood Christ’s becoming wisdom for us in terms of Christ’s perfection revelation of the Father in the divine pedagogy.⁹⁷ This corresponds to reading the ‘foundation’ as Christ himself, instead of faith in him. The focus here is on the objective reality of Christ, rather than the subjective presence of faith, though the two are, of course, inseparable in the spiritual person: Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (cf. Eph. 3:17). This interpretation, of the ‘foundation’ as Christ himself, becomes prominent in the late medieval and Reformation periods, among both Catholics and Protestants. Nicholas of Lyra, for example, understands it as “Christ alone or faith in him”, offering both major interpretations.⁹⁸ For Cajetan, “Christ is the foundation simply and absolutely, for no one is ever saved but by faith in Christ”.⁹⁹ In addition to being the saving foundation, “Christ alone”, according to Hoffmeister, “is truly the foundation upon which the spiritual structure comes to be built”.¹⁰⁰ Upon Christ, who saves us, one builds the superstructure of sound teaching.¹⁰¹

But Christ’s status as the foundation also has wider economic and trinitarian dimensions. Denis the Carthusian, for instance, understands the ‘foundation’ to include both the Father and the Spirit, because it is Christ’s divine power which brings a person to new spiritual life. For Denis, “Christ, according to his divine nature, and the Father and the Holy Spirit, are simply the one, first foundation of the elect, and founding, not founded”.¹⁰² God is objectively first in the transformation of a person from a proud and fleshly human being into a humble, receptive and graced student of the divine wisdom. God is, in every sense, the ‘first foundation,’ having chosen us “in Christ” from the

⁹⁵ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 28v.

⁹⁶ Cf. ch. 1, nn. 10-20.

⁹⁷ Cf. ch. 1, nn. 21-26.

⁹⁸ Nicholas of Lyra, col. 218.

⁹⁹ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 44v-45r.

¹⁰⁰ Hoffmeister, *In utr. ad Cor. Hom.*, p.39.

¹⁰¹ See chapter six, “Measures for Evaluating Good, Deficient and Bad Teaching.”

¹⁰² Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 40v.

foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). This Christ, the eternal wisdom of God in whom we are chosen, became wisdom for us in the flesh of Jesus. Therefore, in Calvin's words, "Christ is the foundation of the Church since he is the single cause of salvation and eternal life, since in him we know God the Father, since in him we have the fountain of every good thing; unless he is known as such, he ceases to be the foundation".¹⁰³ For Calvin, Christ is the foundation of the body of the faithful because in him we have the Father revealed to us, which is to say, in him we come to salvation and 'every good thing.' But it is 'in him,' ἐν Χριστῷ, that we have faith working itself into expression through love. And so, while the foundation of the new spiritual life we have by the Spirit is objectively and primarily Christ himself, it is but another aspect of the same reality to call this faith in Christ. The wisdom given to us in Christ comes to shape our minds and hearts as the Spirit births faith in us through the outer works of miracles and the preaching of the gospel.

Of course, where Christ is not recognized as the source of one's eternal happiness he, Calvin warns, 'ceases to be the foundation'—not because Christ changes, but because a person absents themselves from the Church, his body. Where this occurs, one must return to the beginning, having the foundation of one's life repoured. For Ambrosiaster, the 'carnal' people of 1 Cor. 3:3 are those who were baptized and received the Spirit, but then reverted to their old, animal way of life. The Spirit, in this case, is either hindered by this moral self-forgetting or, if the person fails to "remain in the resolution of rebirth", he totally abandons the temple of their body. However, the Spirit "is always ready for good, and loves repentance";¹⁰⁴ there always remains the opportunity for spiritual rebuilding. Whether anew, or for the first time, the Spirit begins a process of restoration in the human person he comes to indwell.

Vermigli perceives here a definite and irreversible order. We first restore the mind—"the better, I say, part of the soul"—by faith, and the will by hope and love, before establishing "all the faculties of our soul" with pure and sound moral powers. Then we can "cultivate and reform" the powers of speaking, singing, and (spiritual) running and fighting.¹⁰⁵ In other words, Vermigli sees a process of spiritual renewal beginning in the interior of the human person and working its way outward into the very actions of the

¹⁰³ Calvin, *CO49*: 354.

¹⁰⁴ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL81/2*: 31-32; quoted by Raban Maur, *PL112*: 29.

¹⁰⁵ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 22v.

body. Once the mind, the highest in a human being, is remade by the Spirit bringing it to faith in Christ, and the will reformed in love for Christ and hope in him, these new thoughts and desires come to expression in a person's speech and activity.

But the Spirit does not accomplish this only by his own divine inward power; he continues to make use of the outward teaching of the Church's ministers to create spiritual growth. In Sedulius' phrase, "Just like a plant without water, faith without teaching withers".¹⁰⁶ Faith in Christ may be the 'foundation' of a new spiritual life, one enabling us to begin to learn theology, but without the new and continued graces received through teaching, one's faith begins to dry out and shrivel up. This is not the general observation that one needs exposure to new ideas to remain intellectually fresh; rather, when one is drawn by the Father into the economy in which one is "enriched in all things in Christ" (1 Cor. 1:5), one becomes party to a mysterious and infinite wisdom. God knows the whole of this wisdom in a single, eternal moment of comprehension, but we come to know it, as is proper for us, bit by bit. God, thus, wisely dispenses his wisdom to his students by degrees, giving us teachers and the inner enlightenment needed to understand them truthfully until we reach the point of maturity or 'perfection,' *τελειότης* in Christ.

What Makes a Person 'Spiritual'

Faith, we have seen, is the beginning of theology because it is the birth of a true perception of Christ, the divine wisdom. This faith enters our hearts as the Spirit has his way and takes up residence there. Besides faith, however, what other qualities does the Spirit introduce into our lives? How does he reshape and reform us in line with who he is? What makes a person 'spiritual'? In the late medieval and Reformation periods one finds the most formal, and therefore the broadest, definitions of what makes the spiritual person 'spiritual.'

For Denis the Carthusian, the spiritual person is he "in whom is the Spirit of God".¹⁰⁷ Cajetan, more expansively, writes that "a person is denominated 'spiritual' in this proposition from the Holy Spirit, which person, that is, is presented with the light and

¹⁰⁶ Sedulius, *PL*103: 133; quoted by ps.-Jerome, *PL*30: 725.

¹⁰⁷ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 39v.

wisdom of the Holy Spirit”.¹⁰⁸ What makes a person ‘spiritual,’ in other words, is simply the Spirit himself, living in that person and sharing his wisdom and perceptual light. Calvin similarly believes the spiritual person to be “she whose mind is ruled by the enlightening of the Spirit of God”.¹⁰⁹ Just as one needs the Spirit to learn the things of God, as we saw in Ambrosiaster above, this new spiritual life and becoming a spiritual person in the beginnings of faith requires the Spirit himself. One attains spiritual life by the living Spirit; one becomes a spiritual person by the Spirit coming to reside within. This is the Spirit’s making us ‘capable’ of learning the divine wisdom.

More can be said about this new capability. Once he makes a human being a “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 3:16), the Spirit grants them, where and as he wills, all kinds of new moral and spiritual powers. Paul relates this in 1 Cor. 2:13-15, as will the commentary tradition, primarily to new cognitive powers of interpretation or comparison (συγκρίνειν), knowledge (γινώσκειν), and examination or discernment (ἀνακρίνειν): “the spiritual person examines (ἀνακρίνει, *iudicat*) all things” (v.15). But these are not autonomous powers that can be possessed with or without the continuing abiding presence of the Spirit. They are, rather, part and parcel of the encompassing new life “according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4-5), who does not merely ‘visit’ us from time to time but ‘dwells’ in us.¹¹⁰ Thus, Origen suggests, “But if you wish to recognize the ‘spiritual person,’ ‘from their fruits you will recognize them’ (Mt. 7:16)”. What are these fruits? “‘The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control’ (Gal. 5:22-23). Where these are, there is the Spirit, and there the ‘spiritual person’”.¹¹¹ Most of the tradition, however, would focus on the cognitive powers Paul himself highlights.

A spiritual person is, at the most basic level, epistemically opposed to the natural or animal person when it comes to divine matters. What the world thinks foolishness, the Christian recognizes as truly the wisdom of God. Atto of Vercelli thus comments, “Those, therefore, who believe those things which the world judges to be foolish are rightly called ‘spiritual’”. They perceive that the grace of God is not received through human wisdom, but only “in the mystery of faith, for enlightening the understandings of good-willed men

¹⁰⁸ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 44r.

¹⁰⁹ Calvin, *CO49*: 343.

¹¹⁰ Cf. ch. 1, n. 64.

¹¹¹ Origen, *fr.* 11, p.241.

and women”.¹¹² Yet this spiritual understanding can also have a wider bearing.

Theophylact of Ohrid, like Atto, relates the cognitive enlightenment of the Spirit to the new state of the spiritual person, but he takes this further. For Theophylact, “The spiritual person takes everything in a spiritual sense”. Everything, and not only divine reality, is seen πνευματικῶς, ‘in a spiritual sense,’ because the spiritual person’s “mind is enlightened” by the “radiance of the Holy Spirit”.¹¹³ Spiritual judgment extends to all things because a thing is conceived improperly unless its ultimate origin and end is known, and God is the beginning and end of all creatures.

In the scholastic West, the tradition followed Atto’s perception of this spiritual judgment in the narrower sense, as relating to divine realities. But commentators also perceived, as in Origen’s case, these new cognitive powers being paired with moral and affective transformation. Thus the Gloss, the ground layer of medieval exegesis, argued that one can be spiritual “either in life or in knowledge”, in ways that directly contrast with the character of the ‘animal person.’ “A life is spiritual which has the Spirit of the Lord as a driver governing the soul. But that knowledge is spiritual which, although it sees ‘in part and through a mirror’ (1 Cor. 13:12), does not wisely think of God according to bodily images or the letter of the law or human philosophy but, subject to the Spirit of God, judges faithfully and with the greatest certainty”.¹¹⁴ Spiritual knowledge is, as a result, an element of a wider spiritual life, a life ‘governed by’ and ‘subject to’ the Holy Spirit.

Aquinas relates these two parts of the Gloss’ reading to the two faculties of understanding and will. Thus, the ‘spiritual life’ of the Gloss is, for Aquinas, to be spiritual “on the part of the will, with the Spirit of God setting it on fire”; to be spiritual “on the part of the understanding”, on the other hand, occurs “with the Spirit of God shedding light” within it.¹¹⁵ This could be read as a restriction of the Gloss’ understanding, narrowing from a spiritual ‘life’ to a spiritual ‘will,’ but Aquinas is a careful recipient of the tradition. The Gloss relates life to the Spirit governing, specifically, the soul, and Aquinas terms this the “animal powers” of a human being. In a rare non-idiosyncratic moment, John Colet (1467-1519) draws connections between this reading and Christ. Since Christ is

¹¹² Atto of Vercelli, *PL*134: 312.

¹¹³ Theophylact, *PG*124: 596-97.

¹¹⁴ Gloss, col. 214; quoted by Lombard, *PL*191: 1553.

¹¹⁵ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.3.117.

“the wisdom of God and the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:24), Colet writes that Christ is power by firing our wills to love and wisdom by enlightening our understandings to faith.¹¹⁶ In any of these cases, they should be read within the framework Vermigli later establishes: the transformation that takes place in the inner faculties comes to expression in outward bodily action, a ‘spiritual life.’¹¹⁷

One of the chief characteristics of the ‘animal person’ is their bondage to animal affections, fleshly lusts and desire for earthly things. The ‘spiritual person,’ by contrast, “led by the Spirit, does not live by fleshly affections”.¹¹⁸ Nicholas of Amiens offers an interpretation of spiritual affections that is at once medieval spirituality and scholastic theology. It is centred on 1 Cor. 6:17, “The one who adheres to the Lord is one spirit.” On Nicholas’ view, the spiritual person “by grace alone desires spiritual things; who ‘with pure,’ that is, searching out God alone without an admixture of earthly sediment, ‘understanding and total love,’ with all the ardour of love ‘is one spirit with God’; that is, who desires God in believing in this way, because they are as if joined to him, as if there is no distance between themselves and God, as if they are one”.¹¹⁹ The spiritual person by the grace of the Spirit desires (*affectans*) spiritual realities rather than earthly and fleshly ones. This is an ardent desire of ‘total love’ which arises *because*—not *in order that*—they are joined to God by his indwelling Spirit. This union with God enjoyed by the spiritual person implies not only a unity of wills (what he elsewhere calls a “moral theological proposition”) but even a unity of spirit with God the Spirit (the “theological proposition regarding natures”): they “are spirit by one and the same spiritualness in which the Lord is Spirit” and even are so “by the divine essence”.¹²⁰ While one here approaches certain impassable boundaries, Nicholas emphasizes the transformative reality of the present Holy Spirit. United to the Spirit, we not only have our eyes opened to the truth of Christ, but we also have our minds, our wills, our affections and—if not now, then when Christ returns—our natures changed into spiritual forms of what they once were. “A natural body is sown; a spiritual body arises” (1 Cor. 15:44).

¹¹⁶ Colet, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, p.166.

¹¹⁷ Cf. n. 105 above.

¹¹⁸ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 73-74.

¹¹⁹ Nicholas of Amiens, *Comm. Porr.*, p.36.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.46.

Knowing that the Spirit will, in his lordship and authority, perform these transformations in those in whom he comes to reside, a student of God's wisdom should be willing and ready to surrender everything to his movements. "That instrument", Erasmus writes, "is suitable as a craft of the Spirit which presents its whole self to him to be formed and shaped".¹²¹ The Spirit does not effect change in only an area of our lives, perhaps the 'spiritual' as opposed to the 'bodily' part; rather, he makes the whole person 'spiritual.' So we ought to make our whole selves (*se totum*) pliable to his moving. Hoffmeister draws this comparison: "For as a body apart from the spirit is naturally dead, and the whole and integral human being neither hears nor sees nor understands, unless one possesses the Holy Spirit, that is, unless one has been reborn, unless one lives again (since in Adam all died), one cannot perceive anything of the divine. Note here that if the Holy Spirit, also according to the witness of Christ, can 'lead us into all truth' (Jn. 16:13), it is appropriate for us to prepare a dwelling-place for him".¹²² We ought, in other words, to welcome the Holy Spirit into our hearts and our lives, no longer putting up the resistance of sinful flesh but moving in the freedom the Spirit brings.

This transformation of the whole human person has implications, of course, far beyond the learning of theology. God's making of a 'spiritual person' is not only their preparation to receive the divine wisdom, but also their justification, sanctification and redemption (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30). The divine pedagogy, then, is inseparable from the broader economy of salvation, in which the Spirit not only teaches us, but also sanctifies us, redeems us and makes us alive. In other words, in God's saving economy he provides for the salvation of 'the whole and integral human being'—body, soul, mind, emotions. But in relation to God's saving work as a teacher, it is with the cognitive effects of the Spirit's inhabitation that we are primarily concerned (in all their inseparability from the other effects of God's other works). As I turn, then, to consider the redeemed operations of epistemic 'judgment' in the spiritual person, one should remember the broader economic situation in which such operations take place.

¹²¹ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 866; quoted by Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.190.

¹²² Hoffmeister, *In utr. ad Cor. Hom.*, p.26.

The Judgment of the Spiritual Person

The fundamental fault of the ψυχικός ἄνθρωπος, the ‘natural person,’ is that he “does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he is not able to understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person”, on the other hand, “discerns all things” (1 Cor. 2:14-15). This discernment is a form of cognitive judgment (ἀνα-κρίνειν) unavailable to the natural person. Without the Spirit of God, one cannot learn the things of God; one cannot see ‘all things’ as they truly are. “Since”, writes Sebastian Meyer, “human wisdom proceeds by reason corrupted by sin, which is stupid and blind, and cannot know any thing as it really is in itself, to this extent it cannot judge”.¹²³ The natural person, as we saw above, suffers a perceptual deficit by which she takes visible nature as the measure of all that is and is drawn by fleshly affections towards material things. As a result, she cannot know any thing ‘as it really is in itself’ (*qualis reuera est per se*), whether created or uncreated. This is because, lacking the Spirit—according to Aquinas and Calvin, and Catharinus—they are deprived of the “rule for proving and judging anything”.¹²⁴ The spiritual person ‘judges all things’ “not by the light of reason” but by the “oil-lamp of the Word of God, lit by the Holy Spirit”, the “rule prescribed” by the Spirit for judgment.¹²⁵ In an important sense, then, “everything” (πάντα, 1 Cor. 2:15) requires a spiritual judgment to be understood truly.

For Aquinas and Calvin, however, this discernment of the truth of all things relates more particularly to πνευματικά, to spiritual realities, the matters taught in theology. On Aquinas’ view, the spiritual person, “having an understanding enlightened and affections ordered by the Holy Spirit, has correct judgment about individual things relating to salvation”.¹²⁶ Following on the Spirit’s inner working, the faculties of the understanding and affections are restored to their proper functioning. They are “neither”, according to Denis the Carthusian, “deceived by error nor corrupted by passion”.¹²⁷ Possessing, then, a “clear and pure soul”,¹²⁸ the spiritual person is capable of forming correct judgments regarding the wisdom of God’s works of salvation in Christ. It is, as we have seen in the

¹²³ Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 15r. Cf. idem, ch. 1, n. 52.

¹²⁴ Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.153. Cf. n. 14 above.

¹²⁵ Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 33r.

¹²⁶ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.3.118; quoted by Nicholas of Lyra, col. 214.

¹²⁷ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 40r.

¹²⁸ Cf. Musculus, n. 31 above.

last chapter, these saving truths that are central or foundational to the divine wisdom, truths about “Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

Some four centuries before Aquinas, Atto of Vercelli developed the suggestion that in spiritual realities and persons there is a kind of ‘spiritual reason’ (*ratio spiritualis*) at work.¹²⁹ This ‘spiritual reason’ is opposed to natural reason, which is closed to divine things and cannot perceive them truthfully, as they really are. Thus, “because in human wisdom they cannot comprehend how a virgin can give birth, or God suffer, or the dead rise, they consider them foolish, since there is spiritual reason in these things”.¹³⁰ Again, “the ‘words of human wisdom’ (1 Cor. 2:13) cannot comprehend this meaning, nor is it learned by the study of any art, but is conceived through faith by spiritual reason, as it says, ‘Unless you believe, you will not understand’ (Is. 6:9 LXX)”.¹³¹ Human wisdom is born of the operations of natural reason; divine wisdom, in contrast, is received through a new and supernatural operation of spiritual reason, which allows one to make proper cognitive judgments about saving realities.

For Atto, as for Nicholas, this new noetic functionality is inseparable from the union with God we enjoy in the Spirit. Graced by the Spirit’s indwelling presence, we not only desire spiritual realities, but are raised up to divine heights from which we can survey all that is: “‘The spiritual person judges all things,’ for she is above everything since she is with God. And because she is with God, she therefore sees most purely, and whatever she sees, she loves with complete love. She ‘judges all things,’ for whatever good she finds she approves; whatever evil, she disapproves”.¹³² Alternatively, this ‘all things’ can refer, for Atto, to the “intention of individual teachers in the divine Scriptures and the force of every word”.¹³³ Scripture is where the divine wisdom is communicated to Christ’s students; it is primarily in their reading and hearing that spiritual judgment needs to be exercised.

Aquinas, then, focuses the role of spiritual judgment on singulars ‘relating to salvation’; Calvin sees it similarly concentrated on the ‘teaching of the gospel.’ First, he outlines the role of the Spirit in interpreting and discerning the truth: “the Spirit of God,

¹²⁹ It is first used by Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 29. Cf. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, p.270.

¹³⁰ Atto of Vercelli, *PL*134: 301.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, col. 311-12.

¹³² *Ibid.*, col. 312-13.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, col. 313.

from whom the teaching of the gospel comes, is alone its true interpreter, and makes its clear to us.... For the Spirit of God alone recognizes himself and it is his proper office to discern what is his own from others". A wider account of the Spirit's economy is in view here: the same Spirit who inspires the writing of Scripture is the one who can faithfully interpret it and distinguish the spiritual truth he shares from what arises elsewhere. Second, the Spirit provides those he inhabits with this interpretation and discernment. Thus, "he alone is spiritual who has such a stable and solid knowledge of God's mysteries that he can discern the truth from a lie, the teaching of God from human inventions". Not only, then, does the Spirit so enlighten us as to perceive the truth, but also to discern the true from the false. Third and finally, Calvin emphasizes that this is not a possession of the believer, but that "this censure and this right resides with the one Spirit of God. Therefore, insofar as one is reborn, one judges correctly and with certainty in the measure of grace conferred on oneself, and no further".¹³⁴ Spiritual judgment, accordingly, is a grace and not a possession; it is by the ongoing residence of the Spirit in one's heart that one may continue to exercise it. Vermigli is correct to emphasize, then, that when Christians do not understand they ought to "beg with prayers for the enlightenment of the Spirit" and "exercise themselves in reading the Scriptures", trusting in the mercy of God.¹³⁵

To this point, I have been considering the judgment of the individual person apart from broader interpersonal relations; like all abstractions, however, this is an artificial one, and particularly so as we examine the wider structure of the economy of the divine pedagogy. The spiritual person, we have seen, is indwelt by and dependent upon the Holy Spirit, but there is also a particularly important interpersonal context in which such people exist, namely, the Church. All people possessed of the Spirit do, certainly, operate with a spiritual judgment, insofar as they are open and yielding to the Spirit's operation, but how do multiple judgments function in the body of the Church? Are certain members of this body graced with greater capability or authority in outlining the truth? Are there institutional rules and canons which act as divinely-supervised guides? Here I only bring forward two answers, one patristic and one Protestant, which act as representatives of widely-held, yet divergent positions.

¹³⁴ Calvin, CO49: 344-45. Cf. Schrage, *Die erste Brief an die Korinther*, p.274.

¹³⁵ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 88r.

Origen, in the early third century, regards definitions of the Church leadership as aids to the unity Paul is seeking. “He who agrees”, Origen writes, “with every true word and ecclesial teaching about the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and further, follows the ecclesial canons about the economy toward us, about the resurrection and judgment, is not in schism”.¹³⁶ There is, after all, only one Christ and he has only one body; to be in schism is *ipso facto* to be divided from his wisdom. Vermigli, a Protestant, writes on the other hand that “it is very dangerous to employ fleshly wisdom in the deliberation and definition of spiritual matters. For that reason, we have not wished to attribute to the Church supreme censure regarding Scripture and what is necessary for salvation”. Instead, “badly defined or incorrectly constituted, errors of this kind in the Church, whether in councils or by the fathers, were constantly protested by pious men, and God in his wondrous providence took care that they were uncovered”.¹³⁷

Here one finds two conflicting theologies of God’s pedagogical economy: in Origen, the definitions of the Church are part of God our teacher’s work of unity among his people, guiding all his teachers harmoniously into the truths regarding himself and his works of salvation; in Vermigli, God our teacher acts to uncover false teaching in the leadership of his Church so that the whole body can be led more faithfully. For Origen, divine action in the economy is a guarantor of the judgments of the Church’s teachers; for Vermigli, when the Church’s teachers err God acts through other human beings (‘pious men’) to expose incorrect judgments. Deciding between these two understandings of the economy of the divine pedagogy—or making the difficult attempt to reconcile them—is itself a work of spiritual judgment (!) which I postpone. Instead, we pass to one of Paul’s more obscure and dramatic statements, namely, that those who are spiritual and can judge all things possess the very mind of Christ. Yet Calvin’s interpretation of this phrase will renew the problematic posed by Vermigli and Origen.

To Have the ‘Mind of Christ’

At the end of his teaching on the judgment exercised by the spiritual person, and its incomprehensibility on the part of those without the Spirit (2:13-15), Paul makes an astonishing claim: “But we have the mind of Christ” (v.16). What might it mean to possess

¹³⁶ Origen, *fr.* 4, p.234.

¹³⁷ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 20v.

the νοῦν Χριστοῦ, the ‘mind of Christ’? Does this mean we come to share in Christ’s own knowledge? Or perhaps exercise the same kind of judgments as Christ exercises? For Aquinas, it is both these things. Aquinas explains, “‘But we,’ namely, spiritual men, ‘have the understanding of Christ,’ that is, receive in ourselves the wisdom of Christ for judging. Sir. 17:6 (Vulg.), ‘He created in them the knowledge of the Spirit; he filled their hearts with understanding.’ Lk. 24:45, ‘He opened their understanding to understand the Scriptures’”.¹³⁸ For all commentators, in fact, the nature of our possession of the mind—or ‘understanding’ (*sensus*)—of Christ circles, with more or less clarity, around these two elements: the wisdom of Christ itself, often explicated in terms of participation or revelation, and the capacity to judge properly of the divine wisdom by coming to know or holding in faith.

Chrysostom provides a detailed and bold account of these two pieces: the possession of Christ’s wisdom by revelation and the certainty of an indubitable spiritual knowledge. Chrysostom explains:

“But we have the mind of Christ,” that is, we ourselves know those things in the mind of Christ which he also chooses and reveals. Then, since he said that the Spirit revealed (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10), lest anyone do harm to the Son, he adds that Christ showed us these things. He is not saying that we know everything he knows, but that everything we know is not human so as to be doubted, but rather, of his mind and spiritual. For the mind which we have about these things is of Christ; that is, the knowledge we have about matters of faith is spiritual.... “But we have the mind of Christ,” that is, spiritual, divine, having nothing human. For it is not what is of Plato or Pythagoras; rather, Christ places what is of him into our thought.¹³⁹

We do not, then, possess the mind of Christ by a kind of Apollinarian replacement of our human minds with his divine mind. Instead, Christ reveals what he knows in his mind to us “through the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:10), bringing us to know it in a human way and measure. This does not, however, place what we know of Christ in doubt, because what he reveals to us is spiritual knowledge about him, and therefore, beyond the suspicions to which human thought is subject. Yet its reception by a human mind does imply that progression is possible.

¹³⁸ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.3.121.

¹³⁹ Chrysostom, *Hom.* 7.5-6, PG61: 61-62; quoted partially by John of Damascus, PG95: 589; Theophylact, PG124: 597. Cf. Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 51r.

Unlike God's immediate possession of all knowledge about himself and the world, we learn by steps, moving from small beginnings toward more perfect knowledge. Vermigli sees that, "in the present, we have a beginning, rather than perfect, participation in him. For this reason, levels can be established and we can define regarding the faithful that, while they have the Spirit and mind of Christ, which they use, they rightly judge everything according to the level which they have obtained in that mind".¹⁴⁰ For Vermigli, there is a gradation of participation in the mind of Christ. One's spiritual judgment can develop in line with the grace Christ shows us in revealing to us what he perfectly knows as the divine Son. Once again, while we "have" the mind of Christ, we "have" it only as Christ chooses to share it with us; it is not our possession without the ongoing dwelling of Christ in our hearts.

Chrysostom already highlighted the connection between the Spirit's revelation and Christ's mind. Others would develop this insight into a deeper trinitarianism. Hervé of Bourg-Dieu discloses the most basic element: it is "through the reception of the Holy Spirit that we are made participants of Christ's knowledge".¹⁴¹ What Christ knows as the eternal Word, however, does not differ from what is known by the Father and the Spirit. So what Paul calls the 'mind of Christ' could as appropriately be termed the 'mind of God' or of any of the trinitarian persons. "Some call the 'mind of Christ' the Father; others, the Spirit".¹⁴² Our reception of this mind, whether by participation or revelation, displays a definite economic shape, and each mission of the persons plays a role in it. Three commentators in particular present differing but complementary exegeses of the mind of the triune Teacher.

Musculus begins with the identity of Christ's mind with the mind of God, but explains the significance of Paul's decision to speak of Christ in particular. It is "by faith in him", he writes, "that the Spirit is given, and by the Spirit the revelation of the mind of God".¹⁴³ For Musculus, Christ is the centre of the divine economy: faith in him brings the Spirit to live in our hearts, and the Spirit reveals God's mind to us. Similarly for Haymo of Auxerre, "'We have the understanding of Christ,' and, enlightened by the Holy Spirit who with the Father and Son knows all things, we understand what is true about him. The

¹⁴⁰ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 51v.

¹⁴¹ Hervé, *PL*181: 837. Cf. Ephrem the Syrian, *Comm.*, p.52.

¹⁴² Theophylact, *PG*124: 597.

¹⁴³ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 74.

meaning is this: since no one can penetrate the understanding and wisdom of God unless he gives it, therefore, no one ought to doubt the truth of what we learn of the birth and humanity of Christ, because we have the Holy Spirit".¹⁴⁴ Again, Christ is the wisdom we come to understand as the Spirit, who like the Father and Son knows all things, enlightens us to perceive him correctly.

Georg Maior, finally, perceives Christ as not only the subject-matter of this divine mind in which we come to share, but also, like Chrysostom, as the agent of this sharing. Maior does not quite repeat the strong claim of Chrysostom that Christ 'places what is of him into our thought,' but instead takes up the Johannine theme of the Son's revelation of the Father. "We", Maior begins, "namely, who believe the gospel and are reborn and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, hold the mind of Christ, who reveals to us and shows us the Father and his will in the Word by the Holy Spirit. 'For no one has ever seen God; the only-born Son, who is in the heart of the Father, he has explained him' (Jn. 1:18). 'And this is the will of the Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him would have eternal life' (Jn. 6:40)".¹⁴⁵ In each case, there is an inseparable working of the Trinity, in order that we may 'have the mind of Christ.' Here as elsewhere, there is an appropriate ambiguity about the particular agency of the second and third persons—the Spirit reveals God's mind (*Musculus*) and Christ, in what amounts to the same thing, reveals the Father (Maior). But in each, it is first and foremost Christ in whom we place our faith, and through him come to know the wisdom which resides in the divine mind.

Faith, as we saw above, is the beginning of our entry into the knowledge of theology, and for another strand of commentary, it is just this faith which constitutes possession of the mind of Christ. The Gloss understands Paul's claim as follows: "'But we,' etc., who are now, beyond humanity, one spirit with God, 'have the understanding of Christ,' holding with certain faith those things which are of Christ".¹⁴⁶ This 'holding' of Christ's truths is developed, interestingly, along pedagogical lines by the late thirteenth century master Nicolas of Gorran. Nicolas parallels this "holding with certain faith" with how "a well-educated student is said to have the understanding of their teacher".¹⁴⁷ To have the mind of Christ is to be Christ's student, and so to progress in the knowledge and

¹⁴⁴ Haymo, *PL*117: 523.

¹⁴⁵ Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 33v.

¹⁴⁶ Gloss, col. 214; quoted by Lombard, *PL*191: 1553.

¹⁴⁷ Nicolas of Gorran, *Postil.*, fol. 63r. Cf. Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 40r.

judgment of this divine teacher. On Zwingli's account, to be such a student means that "we were taught the counsel or government of God by the breath of the Spirit; or, we were influenced toward the mind and Spirit of God".¹⁴⁸ In Erasmus' words, "'But we,' therefore, 'hold the mind of Christ,' because we drink of his Spirit".¹⁴⁹

With this, we arrive at the point from which I began: to have the mind of Christ means to receive his Spirit, to be taught by the Spirit what Christ himself knows. Before I conclude, however, there is one, idiosyncratic interpretation yet to be considered (and it returns us to the dilemma posed by Origen and Vermigli in a different form); unusually, it belongs to Calvin. In what is perhaps a revealing moment, Calvin suggests it is "uncertain" whether Paul claims the mind of Christ belongs to all believers or only ministers.

Preferring the latter reading, Calvin expands upon the apostle's words this way: "The servants of the Lord are taught under the magisterium of the Spirit what is furthest from the understanding of the flesh, in order that they may fearlessly speak as from the mouth of the Lord, which gift afterward flows down by degrees to the whole Church".¹⁵⁰

According to God's economic arrangement, then, the mind of Christ is localized in those called to the teaching office of the Church. It is through this segment of the body that the wisdom of God and the operations of spiritual judgment come to benefit all the faithful.

Only a few years later, Vermigli would write this response, with Calvin's suggestion clearly in mind: "For what would having the tongue and mind of Christ benefit the apostles, unless those who were instructed by them had also attained from God himself the understanding, ears, and capacity for what they said?".¹⁵¹ Vermigli—correctly, I believe—recognizes Paul's statement about the 'mind of Christ' as the culmination of his treatment of the judgment of the spiritual person, that is, *all* people who are taught by the indwelling Holy Spirit. If their students lacked the Spirit, and so the capacity for spiritual understanding, the work of human teachers of theology would be useless; without, let us recall, the Spirit of God, the things of God cannot be learned.

¹⁴⁸ Zwingli, *Ep. aliq. Pauli*, p.454.

¹⁴⁹ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 866.

¹⁵⁰ Calvin, *CO49*: 346.

¹⁵¹ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 51r.

Students and their Teachers

Calvin's interpretation of the 'mind of Christ' does, however, raise an important issue: the relationship of students to their teachers. As we will see in the next chapter, it is God who gives teachers to the Church to aid students in coming to a knowledge of his wisdom—the same God who, in his economy, dwells in the hearts of both student and teacher, who provides teachers with words to speak and students with the spiritual cognition needed to understand them, and who, being eternal Wisdom, sent his Son into the world to 'become wisdom for us' when the world he created in wisdom was found incapable of bringing us to know him. We will also see that teachers operate with a delimited authority, subordinate to and derivative of God's own ultimate authority, to which students must give heed. On the part of students, however, what is the sort of attitude with which they should approach their teachers? We saw above that they ought to exercise humility toward teachers and fellow students, avoid presumption, and also freely share what they have learned. But do they have some role in choosing their teachers? What if, in their humility, they absorb false lessons from a destructive teacher? Do they have a right or capacity to judge whether a teacher is in fact ordained by God for their good or is only a wolf in sheep's clothing (cf. Mt. 7:15)—whether, that is, they are a true or false teacher?

Three commentators offer three different principles for the relationships of students to their teachers. The first is God's caring oversight of the pedagogy he institutes. Hugh of St. Cher presents a long discussion of the question whether someone sins in believing a false apostle. Yes, he finally concludes, because "if they used all the diligence which they ought to have used, God would not permit them to be misled: he would either have sent them a good preacher, or taught them inwardly himself or by an angel".¹⁵² There is a proper 'diligence' which students not only *may* use, but 'ought' to use in discerning the truthfulness of their instructor's teaching. Interestingly, Hugh argues that in such a case God could act outside the normal means of his economy; rather than teaching through human teachers God could teach the diligent student through his inward teaching alone or by the sending of an angel. God is, Hugh recognizes, not bound

¹⁵² Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, exp. gloss., fol. 80v.

to the economy of human teachers he has set up; as Lord, he has the freedom to teach through other means to accomplish his purposes.

This discernment on the part of students, second, does not require a deep or broad knowledge of theology. What is important is that the teaching received does not undo the “foundation” (1 Cor. 3:10-11) laid in the first beginnings of faith. Erasmus writes, in Paul’s voice: “For the foundation which was laid by us cannot change. The preachers who follow us, of whatever name, unless they preach ‘Christ and him crucified’ (1 Cor. 2:2) are not to be heard”.¹⁵³ Bugenhagen formulates the same principle positively, commending his own practice: “I listen to Augustine, Gregory and good preachers today, when I hear them preaching Christ and the gospel, in such a way that I listen only for the voice of my Shepherd in them”. For it is “Christ alone to whom we must listen in the Word bequeathed to us, and in his ministers”.¹⁵⁴

Not only, third and finally, do students have a duty to be diligent in examining the teaching they receive, whether they preach Christ or no, but they even have a God-given right to do so. Vermigli, commenting on Paul’s claim that “all things are yours” (3:21), argues boldly, “If they ‘are yours,’ judge their teaching, and do not to that extent rashly believe anything they blurt out in an instant. Paul himself encourages those who hear him to judge his teaching”.¹⁵⁵ If “Paul or Apollos or Cephas... are all yours” (3:22), how much more so the teachers we have today! God gives teachers to the Church to build it up into the knowledge and fullness of Christ; thus, theologians are meant to serve their students. If, for some reason, they are hindering or even damaging their students’ movement toward God, then a student has not only the duty but the right to refuse their teaching—albeit with the caveat that a student must form a correct spiritual judgment, in humility and without presumption or envy, about whether they are, in fact, being led away from God. God may well use others in the Church, such as pastors or other teachers (as he used Paul to warn the Corinthians), to help them make such a judgment.

¹⁵³ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 867.

¹⁵⁴ Bugenhagen, *Comm.*, fol. L5v-[L6]r.

¹⁵⁵ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 88r.

Conclusion

In the next two chapters, the heart of my exposition, I deal at length with the position and authority, as well as the method and judgment, of the teachers God gives to the Church (in which there will also be sections that relate especially to students).¹⁵⁶ These teachers began as students, and where they properly retain the humility and openness that characterize spiritual people, they remain students of both divine and human teaching. As Vermigli argued, there are *gradus*, ‘levels’ of participation in the mind of Christ, and we are all rather more at the beginning than already at the end. Some of those who were first drawn into the οἰκονομία of the divine pedagogy by coming to faith, perhaps as a young child, are given the role of teacher in order to help other students of Christ’s school. But this is not a natural progression, a promotion made on the basis of intellectual traits or academic success: this new role also comes to them as a gift of God, with both spiritual empowerment and corresponding responsibility.

God’s giving of theologians is one further moment in the broader economy, which began when God made the world in wisdom, continued when he gave prophets and the law to Israel and found its fulfillment when he sent his Wisdom as the man Jesus. Now that Christ has ascended to the right hand of the Father and poured out the Spirit, those whom he sent to the ends of the earth are commissioned to teach the world everything he first taught them (cf. Mt. 28:19-20). Thus, theologians find their position and authority under Christ’s lordship. The role they play in the economy of the divine pedagogy is given to them by Christ and made possible by the Spirit he sent upon his Church. Some students of theology are made teachers by God, not because of anything in them or done by them, but that God’s purposes in election might be fulfilled (cf. Rom. 9:11). As Aquinas states, Christ supplies what is lacking in his teachers by joining them to himself in faith and love and filling them with the wisdom he is.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ See esp. chapter five, “The Proper ‘Use’ of Teachers” and “Our Outward and God’s Inward Teaching.”

¹⁵⁷ Cf. ch. 1, n. 20.

Chapter Five | The Position and Authority of God's Teachers

"Was Thomas crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Scotus or Albert?"
— Wolfgang Musculus

Teachers of God's wisdom, like the students of this wisdom, stand within and are preceded by God's οἰκονομία, the providential divine outworking in history of the salvation achieved in Christ. The status of teachers, their authority and their power to teach this wisdom is determined and given its particular shape by who God is as Father, Son and Spirit, and the way in which God has chosen to organize, commission and gift them. Paul, in a later section of his first letter to the Corinthians, teaches that God "set in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then acts of power, gifts of healing, helpers, governors, kinds of languages" (12:28). These are all meant to build up the Church toward its fullness, its maturity, its perfection in Christ.¹

Theologians thus play a particular role within this economy of God's saving works, a role within God's own pedagogy. Using their God-given gifts to bring their students to a fuller understanding of the wisdom which God has shown to the world in the cross of Christ, they induct their students into a wisdom which is no less than God himself. God uses theologians as instruments to bring about understanding in his students, and he appoints them as stewards of his mysterious wisdom. This servanthood and stewardship before God is reflected in two other directions in the economy. In relation to their students, teachers are called to serve rather than dominate, even as they bear a delegated authority; and in relation to other ministers in the Church (who may be gifted either for teaching, or for other, complementary offices), teachers are called to avoid ambition and pursue unity. To put it schematically, teachers live *under* God, *above* their students (in a qualified sense) and *alongside* one another.

Teachers Among God's Ministers

How exactly a teacher relates to these other ministers whom they are more or less 'alongside' is a question raised by the biblical text itself. In 1 Cor. 1:17a, Paul states that Christ did not send him to baptize but rather to preach the gospel. This distinction made

¹ A thesis focused on, e.g., 1 Cor. 12, Rom. 12 or Eph. 4 would have given more space to the collegiality of theologians with other ministers God gives to the Church, such as pastors, evangelists, counselors, healers, etc. As it is, 1 Corinthians 1-4 is focused on those who teach the Church. For various positions on the relation between or identity of preachers and teachers, see "Teachers Among God's Ministers," below.

by Paul, between the tasks of baptism and preaching, led commentators to distinguish particular persons within the Church responsible for these tasks. Within the divine economy of salvation, particular persons are gifted to baptize and others moreso to preach. Further, commentators often display what we today would consider an ambiguity by oscillating between talk of preaching and teaching, tasks that tend to be clearly distinguished in our minds. Aquinas regularly wavers between speaking of preachers and teachers,² and there are similar occurrences within Calvin's thought. Both clarify this *prima facie* ambiguity in places other than their comments on 1 Cor. 1-4, and for that reason, we leave this passage momentarily. For Calvin, a clear distinction is made between the pastor and teacher in his *Projet d'ordonnances ecclésiastiques* as well as in the *Institutes*, whereas for Aquinas, the character of the joint pastor-teacher is discerned by looking to the prologue to his 1 Corinthians lectures, as well as his comments on 1 Cor. 12:28.

Aquinas heads his 1 Corinthians lectures with a verse from Wisdom, using it to interpret the division and content of the letter:³ "I will not hide from you the secrets (*sacramenta*) of God..." (6:22). For Aquinas, 1 Corinthians is Paul's teaching on the sacraments, by this meaning both the sacraments of the Church, such as baptism, marriage and the eucharist, and the sacraments or secrets of God's teaching, God's mysterious wisdom. Both, he argues, are to be dispensed by the *praelatus* or the teacher of the Church—here, as in his commentary on Eph. 4:11, he equates the pastor and the teacher.⁴ Thus, baptism and preaching (or teaching) are both tasks charged to the pastor-teachers, and the group of pastor-teachers is responsible for dispensing them together. We will see in a moment why this emphasis on their responsibility 'together' is important, but for now let us move further in the commentary, where Aquinas delineates the relationship of the apostles to other ecclesial offices.

² Aquinas, *In I ad Cor. prol.* 2, 3.2.154.

³ See John F. Boyle, "The Theological Character of the Scholastic 'Division of the Text' with Particular Reference to the Commentaries of Saint Thomas Aquinas," in *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, eds. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish and Joseph W. Goering (Oxford: OUP, 2003), pp.276-83; idem, "Authorial Intention and the *Divisio textus*," in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology*, eds. Matthew Levering and Michael Dauphinais (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), pp.3-8; Timothy F. Bellamah, *The Biblical Interpretation of William of Alton*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: OUP, 2011), pp.15-20.

⁴ Aquinas, *In ad Eph.* 4.4.212.

In 1 Cor. 12:28, Paul gives one of his lists of gifts in the Church (cf. Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11). In this particular list, he names apostles, prophets and teachers. For Aquinas, three things relate to the office of an apostle: the authority to govern the faithful, which properly belongs to the apostolic office; the faculty of teaching; and the power to work miracles to confirm what is taught.⁵ The second of these, the faculty of teaching, belongs “especially” to the apostles, since it was them who Christ commissioned in Matt. 28:19-20, “Go, then, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all I commanded you.” Yet the prophets and teachers, according to Aquinas, are “taken up in communion with this *officium*” and aid the apostles in teaching. The prophets, first, are those who personally received revelation from God, while teachers, second, are those who instruct the people in what has been revealed to the prophets.⁶ Drawing together both passages now, for Aquinas, the pastor-teacher is responsible for teaching the Church what pertains to their salvation (i.e., faith and good morals) in order to lead them to their end in God. They perform this duty under the authority of the apostles and their successors, drawing on the revelation given to the prophets, found in the Scriptures.

Calvin’s division of the offices is quite different, but not original to himself. He is indebted to another Reformer, Martin Bucer, from whom he learned much during a few short years in Strasbourg.⁷ Shortly after returning from there to Geneva in 1538, Calvin drew up a set of ecclesiastical ordinances for the restructuring of a reformed church in the city. In these articles, from 1541, he argues that there are “four offices which our Lord instituted for the government of his Church”: pastors, teachers, elders and deacons. Here he carefully distinguishes between the roles of pastors and teachers.⁸ Pastors are responsible for “proclaiming the word of God”, administering the sacraments and helping the elders with “fraternal correction”.⁹ Teachers, on the other hand, are to “instruct the faithful in sound teaching” in order to prevent ignorance and misunderstandings.¹⁰

⁵ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 12.3.755.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian: The Shape of his Writing and Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), pp.22-24; L. Strohl, “La théorie et la pratique des quatre ministères à Strasbourg avant l’arrivée de Calvin,” *Bulletin de la Société et de l’Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 84 (1935): 123-40, esp. p.136.

⁸ Calvin, *Projet d’ordonnances ecclésiastiques*, CO10: 15-30, at p.15.

⁹ Ibid., p.17.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.21.

Without yet precisely drawing the connection between the roles of pastors and teachers, Calvin here notes that the theology lecture is “the closest degree to the ministry”.¹¹ In the edition of the *Institutio* published two years later, Calvin sharpens the connection and distinction.

In the third edition of the *Institutes*, of 1543, Calvin treats the ecclesial offices by drawing on the list of gifts in Eph. 4:11. As opposed to Aquinas, Calvin reads pastors and teachers again as two distinct offices¹² and argues that they are the only two from the Ephesians list still existing in the Church. Of the five present in the early Church, apostles, prophets and evangelists have ceased to be given. God “now and again revives them as the need of the time demands”, but ordinarily only pastors and teachers are present in the Church.¹³ Calvin also, of course, has a place for elders and deacons, but their role is defined by readings of other passages (Rom. 12:8¹⁴; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Tim. 3:1-13). Pastors and teachers are, in the end, differentiated quite simply. As in his ecclesiastical ordinances, pastors are assigned the tasks of preaching, administering the sacraments and enacting discipline, while teachers are confined to the first of these, now equivalent with “scriptural interpretation”.¹⁵ “The pastoral office, on the other hand, contains all these within itself”.¹⁶ Where Aquinas sees an ‘apostolic fullness,’ out of which teachers share in but one office of the apostles, Calvin supposes a ‘pastoral fullness’ from which teachers partake in one pastoral task. This one *officium* is, in both cases, a gift of Christ to the Church.

To conclude, then, the distinction between (Calvin) or identification of (Aquinas) preaching and teaching and preachers and teachers is developed on the parts of Calvin and Aquinas in terms of an economy of distinct ecclesial offices given by Christ to the Church. For Aquinas, the pastor-teacher, in his one office, is charged with the teaching of faith and good morals through both of what we would distinguish today as preaching and teaching, and for Calvin, while pastors and teachers are distinct offices, nevertheless the task of the teacher in interpreting Scripture soundly is very closely allied to the work of

¹¹ Ibid., p.21.

¹² Cf. Calvin, CO51: 198.

¹³ Calvin, *Inst.* 4.3.4; McNeill-Battles, 2: 1056; CO2: 779.

¹⁴ See Elsie Anne McKee, “Calvin’s Exegesis of Romans 12:8—Social, Accidental, or Theological?,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 23/1 (Apr. 1988): 6-18.

¹⁵ Calvin, *Inst.* 4.3.4; McNeill-Battles, 2: 1057; CO2: 780.

¹⁶ Ibid.

the pastor in preaching the Word to the congregation. Preaching and teaching can be spoken of interchangeably (as, indeed, I have also done in earlier chapters), but with different implications in each case. With this theology of differing and overlapping callings, offices, tasks and gifts now established, we can return to the question raised by Paul's claim early in 1 Corinthians.

The Special Gift of Teaching

With a clearer understanding of the relationship between, or identity of, preachers and teachers in the divine economy, and their relationships to the other ecclesial offices, we are in a better position to appreciate the significance of distinguishing between those who preach (or teach) and those who baptize. In 1:17a, to recall, Paul argues that rather than being sent to baptize, he was sent to preach the gospel. While the apostle claims that he was not sent to baptize, commentators note that in Matt. 28:19-20, Jesus sends all the apostles to baptize all nations, making disciples and teaching them to obey everything he commanded. How can Paul exempt himself from this commission? Various answers were given in the tradition, but all of them involved making some distinction within the economy of grace established by Christ's post-resurrection commission of Paul and the apostles and his gifts to the Church.

For Theodoret of Cyrrhus, writing in the middle of the fifth century, this distinction has to do with the giving of the rare gift of preaching to only a few. Preaching is more honourable, he argues, than baptizing. Moreover, baptism is suitable for anyone worthy of the priesthood, but only those few who receive from God the particular gift of preaching are enabled to undertake it.¹⁷ This theme of preaching (or teaching) being suited for just a few will be the dominant answer of the tradition, in its varying articulations. Atto of Vercelli, most interestingly—and as far as I can see, uniquely—argues instead that the answer is simple: Paul was not present when Jesus commissioned the apostles both to preach and to baptize in Matt. 28:19; rather, his commission came in Acts 9:15, with Christ's words to Ananias, "He is a vessel of election for me, to bear my name before the Gentiles..."¹⁸ Paul was only sent to preach, to bear Christ's name before the Gentiles, and was never given a commission to baptize. Musculus' position is rather

¹⁷ Theodoret, *PG*82: 233.

¹⁸ Atto of Vercelli, *PL*134: 298.

untenable, and directly contrary to that of Atto. Writing in the Reformation period, he believes an argument such as Atto's is "rash". If Paul says that he was not sent to baptize, then Matt. 28:19-20 and Mark 16:16 cannot be read as implying such a commission, since Paul certainly did not, Musculus claims, receive a separate commissioning.¹⁹

Aquinas and Calvin, as usual, provide a clear-sighted evaluation of the problem. Both confront Paul's assertion with Matt. 28:19, and both make an important distinction in order to preserve both the universality of Jesus' commission and the faithfulness of Paul's apostolic practice. Aquinas admits that Paul was sent to baptize and to preach, as were the other apostles, but Paul and the other apostles preached themselves, whereas they baptized by means of "lesser ministers". Here Aquinas cites the statement of the twelve in Acts 6:2, "It is not right for us to leave the Word of God..."²⁰ A kind of hierarchy, as we will see more clearly below, emerges between 'better' and 'lesser' ministers, between those who have rarer and more valued gifts and those with more common gifts.

Calvin operates with a similar hierarchy, but now not between 'better' and 'lesser' ministers, but between more or less prioritized tasks. Again, Calvin sees that Paul was commanded both to preach and to baptize, but baptism is "added on" to teaching as an "appendage", such that "the first place always remains for teaching".²¹ In his own practice, Calvin would preach and a less experienced minister would administer baptisms.²² In sorting out the distinctions, then, between baptism and preaching or baptizers and preachers, commentators always sought to make a theological distinction in the economy: either preaching is a different gift than baptism (Theodoret) or Paul received a different commission than the other apostles (Atto contra Musculus); or if Paul was called to perform both tasks, he devoted himself to what was primary, the task of preaching (Calvin), and left the secondary task to lesser ministers (Aquinas), called and gifted by God in their own ways.

This distinction between preaching as the more difficult task and gift and baptism as the common, simpler task goes all the way back to Origen. He writes simply,

¹⁹ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 30.

²⁰ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.2.39.

²¹ Calvin, CO49: 319. Cf. Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 41r.

²² Elsie Anne McKee, "Calvin and His Colleagues as Pastors: Some New Insights into the Collegial Ministry of Word and Sacraments," in *Calvinus Praeceptor Ecclesiae: International Congress on Calvin Research, Princeton, August 20-24, 2002*, edited by Herman J. Selderhuis (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2004), pp.9-42.

“Preaching is a greater thing than baptizing”.²³ The same sentiment in Ambrosiaster is transmitted to the Latin tradition,²⁴ where it takes influential expression in the Gloss. The compiler of the Gloss writes there, “For the less learned can baptize perfectly as well, but to preach the gospel perfectly is a much more difficult and rarer work”.²⁵ Denis the Carthusian expands upon this argument when he writes that baptizing “can be performed just as perfectly by the lesser and barely learned as by the perfect” whereas preaching “cannot be perfectly undertaken except by the very perfect and learned”.²⁶

We seem far, at this point, from the recognition of these different tasks as gifts of Christ and part of his particular calling. It appears as if preaching is a human work—albeit a rare, difficult one, but a human work nonetheless. When Aquinas argues that “in baptism the diligence and power of the one baptizing does nothing... but in the preaching of the gospel the wisdom and power of the one preaching does much”, the question becomes even sharper.²⁷ These assertions, however, need to be read within the larger scope of the economy, that is, alongside comments on the character of these abilities as gifts. Aquinas will also say, for instance, that when Paul speaks of Christ becoming wisdom for us (1 Cor. 1:30), this shows “how God fills up what is lacking in his preachers through Christ”.²⁸ Or as Calvin puts it more comprehensively: “That we have ministers of the gospel is his gift; that they excel in the necessary gifts is his gift; and that they perform the office committed to them is, in the same way, his gift”.²⁹

This same understanding filtered through to the Reformation, namely, that baptism is a more common, simpler task given to many ministers to perform, whereas preaching or teaching is a rarer, more difficult task given to a few. Of course, this was amended somewhat by the Protestant conviction that all ministers are called to preach the Word, not only a few.³⁰ Calvin thus modifies this position to argue that while all may be equally called to baptize as well as to preach, each should devote themselves to that task at which they are most gifted. He writes, “But since teaching belonged only to a few,

²³ Origen, *fr.* 5, p.234.

²⁴ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 12.

²⁵ Gloss, col. 201; quoted in Lombard, *PL*191: 1541. Cf. Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 17r-v.

²⁶ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 37v.

²⁷ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.2.39. Cf. Nicholas of Lyra, col. 200.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.4.71.

²⁹ Calvin, *CO*51: 196-97.

³⁰ See, e.g., Calvin, *Inst.* 4.3.2-6; *CO*2: 778-81; McNeill-Battles, 2: 1055-59.

while to many it was given to baptize, and further, since many could be taught at once, while baptism could only be conferred one at a time, Paul, who excelled in his ability to teach, pursued the work which was more necessary for him, and left to others what they could do better”.³¹ Thus, rather than the opinion of Theodore that preaching is “more honourable” than baptism,³² or that of Bullinger, who said the “glory of baptism seems to be barely visible when compared to the glory of the preaching of the gospel”,³³ Calvin argues for a distribution of tasks according to relative gifting within the whole body of ministers. It is, of course, Christ who distributes these gifts through the Spirit, and so if he chooses to bless a Paul with a special aptitude for preaching, Paul should devote himself to that task, rather than another he may be equalled called to as part of his office.

Because, as Aquinas and Calvin both argued, the one preaching had an important influence on the quality of their work, there was somewhat more room to refer to it as *their* work. Paul, as the Gloss notes, speaks of “my gospel” (Rom. 2:15) in a way that would be inappropriate to speak of baptism—Paul never talks of ‘my baptism.’ This is because in teaching, one teacher is more gifted than another, and therefore teaches more effectively than another, whereas in baptism it makes little sense to say that one is more or less effectively baptized than another because they had a better or worse baptizer.³⁴ Teachers in the Church can speak, then, of *their* own teaching with meaning. Yet, they should always remain mindful of the extent to which their own teaching is dependent on the teaching of God, and further, how their own vocation, training and even day-to-day work hangs on the encompassing and enabling divine pedagogy.

God’s Authorship and Authority

Up to this point, I have been largely concerned to show the relation of various ministers to one another, among the different ecclesial offices conferred by Christ on the Church, and also among different holders of the same office. As I stated above, teachers are situated at a certain position within the divine economy: *alongside* other ministers, *above* their students (in a certain sense) and *below* God. I now turn to this most crucial relation: teachers are who they are by virtue of God’s calling, gifting and commissioning.

³¹ Calvin, CO49: 319; CNTC9: 31, translation modified.

³² Cf. n. 17 above.

³³ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 12v.

³⁴ Cf. Gloss, col. 199; quoted in Lombard, PL191: 1539, with modifications.

Ministers are, as the Gloss puts it, decidedly “not the Lord”.³⁵ Even if they have a unique influence on *their* teaching, they would not exist—much less teach—without God’s prior and accompanying work. Aquinas expands upon this Gloss, stating, “They are not lords, but ministers.... As if to say that when they act in baptism and preaching, they do not act first and foremost as lords, but as his ministers”.³⁶ Calvin agrees, using precisely the same language.³⁷ Hugh of St. Cher points out that it was precisely because Satan wanted to act as the Lord that he fell from his ministerial position.³⁸

Erasmus, writing in the early Reformation period, begins to add some specificity to this claim that God is the Lord by reference to Christ’s lordship: “‘One should thus esteem us’ (1 Cor. 4:1), not as authors or lords, but as it is right to esteem us who as ministers undertake the work of Christ”.³⁹ As Cajetan puts it, “Not as princes, not as lords but as ministers, and not of just any lord but of Christ”.⁴⁰ Especially in Calvin’s hands, this theme receives great theological development: since we are Christ’s ministers, we are like ‘tools’ or ‘instruments’ of his lordship that he puts to ‘use’ for a particular purpose, namely, human salvation. In the *argumentum* to his commentary, Calvin writes, “There is one Lord and all are his servants. Every single one is a tool and he alone administers the power, and from himself he produces the full effect”.⁴¹ Although God can act alone (*per se*), nevertheless he adopts helpers and uses them as tools.⁴²

And God ‘uses’ these ministers for the highest purpose: to bring about human salvation. Different Reformers speak variously of this salvific intention. Calvin says God uses ministers to dispense the incomparable treasures of the faith;⁴³ Hemmingsen, that they are tools by which people are called to faith;⁴⁴ and Vermigli, that ministers are God’s instruments or tools for human salvation.⁴⁵ All, of course, envision the same reality, that is, that God’s ‘use’ of the teaching or preaching of certain human persons, to which they have been called and for which they have been gifted, is to the same end as all the other

³⁵ Interlinear Gloss, cols. 223-24.

³⁶ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.1.133.

³⁷ Calvin, CO49: 362.

³⁸ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, moral., fol. 78v.

³⁹ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 869; quoted in Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.196.

⁴⁰ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 45v.

⁴¹ Calvin, *argumentum*, CO49: 300. Cf. Lefevre d’Etaples, *S. Pauli Ep.*, fol. 109v.

⁴² *Ibid.*, col. 352.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, col. 349.

⁴⁴ Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.45.

⁴⁵ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 70r.

offices of the Church: to bring human beings to the salvation for which provision has been made in Christ. Theologians are those who, in particular, teach their students to both know God and know about him more deeply.

In the same way, then, that all lordship is reserved to God alone, so too is all ‘authority’ God’s alone. Only God is truly sovereign over all things, and all human rule and reign—including the little human rule of the Church’s ministry—is subject to him. This drives even more deeply, however, toward the dependence of all creation on God its creator. As Nicholas of Amiens writes, in fine Latin, “For in the same way as a human being is nothing of himself, nothing at all comes from him. For in the same way as a human being cannot be God, by nature he is, I say, in this way not the author of anything, since to him alone belongs the authorship of all things whose nature alone is divinity alone”.⁴⁶ No human person is the author of creation, but only its steward. In the same way, no human person is the author of grace, but only its minister.⁴⁷

The comments of Theophylact of Ohrid add somewhat to this, when he states, “We teachers, Paul says, are God’s coworkers, acting together toward God’s purpose, that is, desiring to save. So we are not the sole workers of salvation, or its givers.... For all is of God”.⁴⁸ We are, to recall what has been said, ‘instruments’ or ‘tools’ which God ‘uses’ for his purposes, to bring people to salvation. We are not the authors of this divine pedagogy, but only its servants. The power to bring to completion God’s intentions is not in our hands, but only in his. As Erasmus puts it, “They are not the authors, and they administer a foreign business at their peril—and this very ability to administer they owe to Christ. By means of this common author, each one functions in their own part, as is assigned to each by God”.⁴⁹

God is the author not only of creation but also of this subsequent mission to save his creation gone astray. Though he does this by means of particular people, it is God who enables and coordinates this diverse activity, ensuring that each one has their part to play in the ongoing salvation of the world. But each has their role given to him and empowered by God; of themselves, they can do nothing. This is expressed differently by various Reformation-era authors. For Bullinger, God does all things, but in a certain order

⁴⁶ Nicholas of Amiens, *Comm. Porr.*, p.44.

⁴⁷ Nicolas of Gorran, *Postil.*, fol. 63v.

⁴⁸ Theophylact, *PG124*: 601.

⁴⁹ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 867.

and through *media*;⁵⁰ for Musculus, ministers are not the primary cause of faith, but secondary and instrumental causes;⁵¹ for Primaticci, God alone is the giver of grace authoritatively, but ministers are givers of grace in the sense that they dispense or minister the grace that properly belongs to God alone, the author of this grace.⁵²

A parallel can be drawn here with the power of Christ in baptism. In baptism, Haymo of Auxerre teaches, Christ allows his ministers to touch externally with water, but the actual, internal power of baptism to forgive sins he retains for himself as his own (*sibi proprie retinuit*).⁵³ Although he would, of course, be able to give his ministers this interior power, being God, he holds back from this.⁵⁴ Aquinas picks up on this line of thought, which reaches him through the Gloss, Lombard and Robert of Melun, and distinguishes between various powers Christ possesses with regards to baptism, some held in virtue of his divinity and others in virtue of his humanity. Only the last of these human powers is remitted to other baptizers, namely, the power to confer the sacrament in Jesus' name.⁵⁵

At this point Aquinas adds contours to his theology of the power of the sacrament by reference to Christ's incarnation. While he does not explicitly draw out the parallel, one could perhaps see a similarity in a theology of teaching. Christ's divine power in baptism, along with the Father and Spirit, is to cleanse interiorly, effecting the work of grace in the heart of the recipient, something only possible for God, as we will see below. But the first of Christ's human powers is to institute the sacrament. In a similar fashion, Christ institutes divine teaching in his earthly mission by instructing the disciples and then commissioning them to teach all nations everything he first commanded them (Matt. 28:19-20). It is this attentiveness to the particular roles of Christ and Spirit as our teacher that emerges clearly also in this connection: their 'authorship' and 'lordship' takes characteristic forms based on the nature of their missions within the divine economy of salvation.

⁵⁰ Bullinger, *Comm.*, fol. 31r.

⁵¹ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 83.

⁵² Primaticci, *Lit. exp. ep. Pauli*, fol. 80v.

⁵³ Haymo, *PL*117: 513; quoted in Gloss, col. 199, Lombard, *PL*191: 1538.

⁵⁴ Robert of Melun, *Qu. ep. Pauli*, p.175.

⁵⁵ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.2.29.

The Teaching Authority of Christ and the Spirit

Christ, first of all, is the head of his body, the Church. As such, Calvin claims, his lordship demands that “he alone should reign in the Church”,⁵⁶ a reign he exercises by means of his Word in preaching and teaching. This is appropriate because, of course, he himself is the Word, the eternal wisdom of the Father. Since his authorship or authority is given this exclusivity by Calvin, it is natural for him to then assert that just as Christ alone is the head of the Church, he too, properly speaking, is the only teacher of the Church.⁵⁷ Of course, he has both biblical and traditional authority for such a claim. In Matt. 23:10, a verse important in the medieval period,⁵⁸ Jesus tells the disciples, “You are not to be called teacher, for you have one Teacher, Christ.” Jesus reserves the authority of teaching for himself alone. Calvin also points out that there is no one else about whom the Father commands, “Listen to him” (Matt. 17:5). He quotes this passage in order to warn against detracting from Christ’s unique magisterium, his teaching authority or authorship.⁵⁹ To try to claim authority in teaching about God apart from Christ’s commission would be to derogate from the Son’s unique authority, both human and divine. As Chrysostom puts it sharply, “Your teacher is Christ, yet you choose human beings as patrons of the teaching”!⁶⁰ Only Christ can be our teacher in the sense that he is its author; to him alone belongs the authority to teach us of God, because he is himself God and God’s wisdom.

Of course, this magisterium of the Son should not be understood in such a way that the Spirit is excluded from its possession. Calvin writes in another place that “the servants of the Lord are taught under the magisterium of the Spirit what is far removed from human understanding”, in order to spread this knowledge to the whole Church.⁶¹ In fact, the Spirit’s work in the divine pedagogy seems especially connected in the economy to universality: his work is to diffuse Christ’s teaching across the whole Church and the whole world, as we will see more fully below. But this is a work that takes place in individual teachers and listeners, one by one. Theodoret of Cyrrhus writes, “For the grace of the Spirit makes one worthy, and capable of teaching others without needing others’

⁵⁶ Calvin, CO49: 316. A verbally parallel claim is found in *Inst.* 4.3.1, written three years before (CO2: 776-77; McNeill-Battles, 2: 1053).

⁵⁷ Calvin, CO49: 316.

⁵⁸ Cf. Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.2.28.

⁵⁹ Calvin, CO49: 360; quoted in Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.58.

⁶⁰ Chrysostom, *Hom.* 1.1, PG61: 12; cited in Theophylact of Ohrid, PG124: 564.

⁶¹ Calvin, CO49: 346.

teaching”.⁶² Melanchthon puts the same point more directly: “No one, unless they possess and live by the Spirit, can teach spiritual things”.⁶³ It is the grace of the Spirit that makes one capable of this *officium*. Whether this takes place extraordinarily, as in the case of Paul, or by more usual means, it is the grace of the Spirit which enables a teacher to become capable of the material they are entrusted with teaching, the divine wisdom. Finally they come to a point of perfection, where they no longer need others to teach them.⁶⁴

Hemmingsen extends this thinking polemically, to correct what he sees as the error of “Anabaptists and other Enthusiasts” who believe they are under the magisterium of the Spirit, but not the Word or the Church. He writes, “The Apostle... shows the Holy Spirit to be the one, true teacher of the mysteries of God, under whose magisterium alone Paul was instructed. Yet this verse [1 Cor. 2:10] in no way enfranchises Anabaptists or other Enthusiasts. For the Holy Spirit is always the teacher of the Church, yet through the spoken word which the apostles and their successors were commanded to proclaim to every creature”.⁶⁵ The Holy Spirit teaches us, yes, but teaches us through his ministers by means of the Word. The Anabaptists, according to Hemmingsen, made an error about the character of the divine pedagogy; they isolated the teaching work of the Spirit from the Word and his ministers, thus failing to perceive God’s wisdom where he offers it.

Jesus promises that the Spirit “will not speak on his own authority”, an authority separate from Father and Son, “but whatever he hears he will speak” (Jn. 16:13). This is not a subordinate speaking, however, but a lordly speaking of the Spirit. “The Holy Spirit”, Maior comments, “makes use of the Word of God as an instrument or key, by which he reveals, opens or unseals the wisdom and will of God hidden in a mystery and covered from the world”.⁶⁶ Further, this revealing or unsealing activity of the Spirit through the Word is intended to reach the whole world, a universality evident from the signs of Pentecost. Maior sees the different languages spoken at Pentecost as a sign of “the languages of diverse nations which the Spirit will use in exercising his ministry”, spreading the gospel teaching of Christ across the world, unfolding the hidden wisdom of God to all

⁶² Theodoret, *PG82*: 245.

⁶³ Melanchthon, *Annot.*, fol. 89r; quoted in Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.201.

⁶⁴ Cf. Gloss, col. 209.

⁶⁵ Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.34.

⁶⁶ Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 29v-30r.

nations. This is “the *officium* for which the Father and Son sent him into the world”.⁶⁷ The Spirit’s function in the economy, then, is to universalize the wisdom present in the flesh of Jesus. This is a task he executes in his own lordly authority in this time after Pentecost, before the return of Christ.

Together, then, the Father, Christ and the Spirit exercise a joint and indivisible magisterium in the Church. This is the form their ‘authorship’ or ‘lordship’ takes with regard to this particular office of instruction in knowledge of God, just as they exercise ‘lordship’ in the dispensing of the sacraments, healing or evangelism. The Father, here as elsewhere, is the origin of this pedagogical mission, sending the Son and then the Spirit into the world. As the Son becomes incarnate in the person of Jesus, he receives teaching from the Father (Jn. 7:16), though not in such a way that it is not also his own.⁶⁸ He inaugurates a new instruction, one that fulfills the law and the prophets of Israel that were unable to bring God’s people to their intended end in him, and he commissions new teachers to perpetuate his teaching (Matt. 28:19-20). Upon his ascension to the Father, the Spirit is sent with the mission of enabling this teaching to flourish in the Church and to spread across the world, gathering all nations into the sphere of the divine pedagogy. He shares with the world the “deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10): “All that the Father has is mine. That is why I said that he will receive what is mine and announce it to you” (Jn. 16:15). God intends, initiates and executes his plan to bring the world to knowledge of himself through the sending of Christ and the Spirit and their calling, gifting, commissioning and enabling of various human ministers. In all these activities, he retains the ‘authorship’ and the ‘lordship’ that are rightfully his own; an attempt to inaugurate one’s own teaching or to claim God’s teaching as one’s own would be a usurpation.

The Authority of Christ and the Problem of Theological Schools

This, then, is the seriousness of Paul’s rebuke in 1 Cor. 1:13, “Is Christ divided?”. Since it is the same Christ who exercises his authority in every human teacher, to set up one against other or to form various schools would be to divide Christ. As Aquinas puts it, “They [the Corinthians], by attributing to others what properly belongs to Christ, were in a certain

⁶⁷ Ibid., fol. 30r-v.

⁶⁸ Cf. Augustine, *trin.* 2.4-5.

way dividing Christ up, making many Christs, against what Matt. 23:10 says, ‘Your teacher is one, Christ,’ and Is. 45:22, ‘Turn to me and you will be saved, all the ends of the earth, because I am the Lord and there is no other’.”⁶⁹ Calvin, rather than speaking of ‘many Christs,’ uses the image of tearing Christ into many pieces.⁷⁰ Paul, he argues, “wants so to preserve the magisterium in the Church for the one Christ, that all depend on him, and that among us he is named the one Lord and teacher and is not set against any human name”.⁷¹ Now, theologians “are also teachers in their own way, but this is always to be held as the qualification, that what is Christ’s own should remain to him unharmed”, that is, that he remains nevertheless our one teacher.⁷² Among the Corinthians, ‘boasting’ or ‘glorying’ in human preachers was a great problem (1:29-31). To give glory to human teachers, Erasmus argues, is “to make authors of ministers”, something they decidedly are not.⁷³

In the Reformation, as the reader may surmise, this theology of God’s sole authority takes on a sharply polemical edge. Bullinger, for instance, sees the same problem Paul identifies with the Corinthians occurring in his own day when what should belong to Christ is shared with teachers or with the saints.⁷⁴ But the axe is laid at the root of the tree when Pellikan argues that Christ is actually not divided when people profess themselves servants of a human teacher, someone other than Christ the Lord, by preaching another gospel which is in fact not the gospel; instead, they divide themselves from Christ.⁷⁵ Pellikan’s contention forces the question: what kind of a violation of Christ’s authorship of divine teaching qualifies as exiting his body, the Church, altogether? What counts as a failure to profess Christ’s lordship faithfully to such a degree that one is no longer a Christian? Is there any validity to attending to one of his teachers more than another, or is every preferring of one human teacher over another a case of schism from Christ? What role, if any, can there be for theological ‘schools’?

This last question, in particular, receives extensive treatment in the medieval and Reformation periods. If Christ is really the one teacher of the Church, then what place can

⁶⁹ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.2.28.

⁷⁰ Calvin, *CO49*: 316.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*; quoted in Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.13.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 861.

⁷⁴ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 11v-12r.

⁷⁵ Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.182.

there be for Thomists and Scotists, Lutherans and Calvinists? Is there a way that teachers can be authorities, in Calvin's phrase, *quoque suo modo*, 'also in their own way', without detracting from the unique authority of God? This is a question that arises in virtue of Paul's report that some among the Corinthians were saying, "'I follow Paul,' or 'I follow Apollos,' or 'I follow Peter,' or 'I follow Christ'" (1:13). The commentary tradition was consistent in reading this passage of Paul's letter against contemporary party conflicts. If Christ alone was crucified for our salvation, why should we prefer Peter over Paul? Both are apostles of Christ. The Gloss picks up a saying of Augustine which summarizes the tradition well: "We who are called Christians do not believe in Peter, but rather in the one in whom Peter believed.... That Christ who was Peter's teacher in the teaching which leads to eternal life, is also our teacher".⁷⁶ Whoever 'glories' in their own teacher (*proprio magistro*), whether Peter or Paul or Apollos, acts "as if Christ is not the one teacher of all",⁷⁷ but as if they are students of those who invent their own teachings, rather than receiving them from Christ.

The Gloss, again, introduces Paul's first letter to the Corinthians by identifying the main problem in the city as teachers gathering followers in their own names (*proprij nominis*).⁷⁸ To follow teachers in this way, with students calling themselves 'followers of Paul' or 'followers of Peter' rather than simply 'Christians,' is actually a kind of idolatry. This is due to the nature of Christ's teaching authority, one he possesses not merely as one human teacher among others, but as God himself, exercising his pedagogical intention as the divine Saviour. Lombard explains this in comparison with baptism: "One says, 'I was baptized with this person's baptism,' and another, 'I was baptized with that person's baptism.' But to speak this way is a kind of idolatry".⁷⁹ Hugh of St. Cher expands on this (in his *expositio glossae*, interestingly) by explaining that Lombard says this because the Corinthians "attributed to a creature what ought to be attributed to God", that is, they attributed the authorship of their teaching to the human teachers, rather than God from whom these human teachers had received it, "and the person who attributes to a creature the worship to be presented to God is an idolater".⁸⁰ Thus, this

⁷⁶ Augustine, *ciu.* 18.54; quoted in Gloss, col. 200.

⁷⁷ Calvin, CO49: 348. Cf. Calvin, n. 59 above.

⁷⁸ Gloss, *prologus*, col. 193.

⁷⁹ Lombard, PL191: 1537.

⁸⁰ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, exp. gloss., fol. 73v.

ascription of 'glory' to human teachers by taking on their names as followers, rather than adhering to the sole name of Christ, is a kind of idolatry.

An error about God, in addition, entails an error about the creature.⁸¹ Catharinus writes, "So whoever wants to follow Paul, if they separate themselves from the apostle", that is, by believing him to be the author of his own teaching and thus separate from the other apostles, "are now no longer following the Paul who is united with Apollos, but have set up for themselves their own idol, which they have fabricated for themselves in place of Paul".⁸² Thus, whoever misattributes authority in the teaching of theology by regarding human teachers as properly the 'lords' or 'authors' of their own teaching and understanding not only fails to understand God properly, but also fails to understand human teachers properly. They set up an object of false worship where God alone should be our praise. There are numerous ways in which this can happen, of course, and many commentators have used this verse to lay the charge of schism or idolatry on their opponents.

Targets have shifted throughout the history of exegesis, depending on the polemical concerns of the times. Paul's rebuke has been applied to the philosophical schools, heretics, monastic orders, scholastic doctors and various parties of Reformers. Erasmus, writing in the early Reformation, applies Paul's criticism in 1 Cor. 1:12 to the philosophical schools, where a follower of Pythagoras, Plato or Aristotle would boast in their own philosopher and "wage war" on others.⁸³ Erasmus sees this as a characteristic of the followers of the 'authors' of worldly wisdom, something unbecoming for those instructed in divine wisdom. For Ambrosiaster, in the latter half of the fourth century, it was the heretical Donatists, Novatians, Arians and Photinians who came under fire. They were "heretics" who "seemed to venerate human beings in place of Christ", practicing a kind of idolatry.⁸⁴ Atto of Vercelli writes that the Corinthians, "deceived by heretics, desired to be called by their names, as an Arian is so named because of Arius, a Sabellian

⁸¹ And *vice versa*; so Aquinas, *ScG* 2.3.

⁸² Catharinus, p.155.

⁸³ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 861.

⁸⁴ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 10.

because of Sabellius”, and so forth.⁸⁵ Later, others would connect these condemnations of Ambrosiaster with new ‘heresies’ in their own day.⁸⁶

In the highly polemical period of the Reformation, of course, this verse gave rise to some sharp accusations. Already in the Middle Ages, some concern had been expressed surrounding the diverse monastic orders,⁸⁷ but in the heat of Protestant-Catholic controversy, this came to the fore. “In this verse”, Hemmingsen writes, “that vain superstition of the monks stands convicted, who proudly boast that the teacher of their sect is Francis, Dominic, Bernard or another”.⁸⁸ This was not solely a Protestant polemic, as might be expected. Catholics too, such as Cardinal Cajetan, opposed the quarrels of the monks.⁸⁹ Even Hoffmeister, in the midst of defending the monks against Protestant accusation, is forced to admit their past internecine warfare.⁹⁰

Quarrels surrounding the “contentious scholastic doctors”, on the other hand, while not quite as openly troubling as physical violence, were perhaps more insidious.⁹¹ As Musculus writes so cuttingly, “Was Thomas crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Scotus or Albert?”.⁹² As with the heretics or schismatics of Ambrosiaster’s polemic, here too the issue is with considering these scholastic figures as ‘authors’ of their teaching, “to whom people commit faith and whom they follow through their whole life”.⁹³ Finally, the various Protestant followings were a target for both Protestant and Catholic polemic. Bullinger laments that in his age the names of “Lutherans” and “Zwinglians” were no less common and well-known than those of “Paulines” and “Petrines” among the Corinthians.⁹⁴ Hoffmeister calls them “the false prophets of this age”, who despised the name ‘Christians’ and used to greet one another as “Evangelicals” or “brothers”, but now are reduced to calling one another “Lutherans, Zwinglians, Anabaptists, Iconoclasts, Dreamers and other portentous names”.⁹⁵ It is also in discussion

⁸⁵ Atto of Vercelli, *PL*134: 296.

⁸⁶ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 12v; Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 5r.

⁸⁷ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, moral., fol. 74r.

⁸⁸ Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.13; cf. Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 15v, 16v; Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 18; Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 11r.

⁸⁹ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 41r.

⁹⁰ Hoffmeister, *In utr. ad Cor. Hom.*, p.9. The Protestant is Bullinger: see n. 88 above.

⁹¹ Hoffmeister, *In utr. ad Cor. Hom.*, p.8.

⁹² Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 27; cf. Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.142.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, *praefatio*, fol. 2r; cf. Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 16v.

⁹⁵ Hoffmeister, *In utr. ad Cor. Hom.*, pp.8-9.

around the religious orders and the Reformation factions, however, that one finds the clearest articulations of principles for appropriate unity and conditions under which separation might be necessary.

Hugh of St. Cher, responding already in the thirteenth century to questions about the validity of the religious orders, writes that they possess, “in substance, the same rule”.⁹⁶ In other words, the one Christ has taught their founders and so, despite the diversity of their written rules, they are governed by the same Spirit. The Augustinian Hoffmeister argues along similar lines in the sixteenth century: “The monks indeed differ in clothing, in name and in ceremonies, but they are nevertheless Catholic, because they profess and teach the Catholic faith”. He then turns this around to oppose Protestants: “But they differ both in name and in clothing, in ceremonies and in teaching, nor do they deserve to be called Catholic, because they have separated themselves from the Church”.⁹⁷ The polemic adopted against the religious orders failed to have much cogency precisely because Protestants fought among themselves and followed this or that teacher, even while believing they were only following Christ.

Both Cajetan and Catharinus made an interesting use of the fact that Paul, among mentioning those who say they followed Paul or Apollos or Cephas, also mentioned those who say, “I follow Christ.” Cajetan claims that those who follow Christ in this way, who make “Christ the head of a faction” rather than the head of the universal Church, are those who oppose Christ to the fathers of the Church.⁹⁸ This is an argument on the basis of the divine economy: Christ taught the Fathers of the Church and uses them to teach us in turn. Catharinus argues that those who ‘follow Christ’ in this sense, “on the pretext of following Christ, hold his ministers in contempt”. This is particularly the fault of Lutherans, he alleges, who “accept Christ alone while spurning his members—if indeed he can be accepted this way”.⁹⁹ One cannot accept Christ without accepting his ministers at the same time; in the economy, Christ cannot be received without simultaneously entering the Church with the ministers, past and present, God has given to it.

Musculus, interestingly, agrees to a great extent with the argument of Cajetan and Catharinus that ‘I follow Christ’ can be said in a schismatic way. To state, “I follow Christ,”

⁹⁶ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, moral., fol. 74r.

⁹⁷ Hoffmeister, *In utr. ad Cor. Hom.*, p.9.

⁹⁸ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 41r.

⁹⁹ Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.143.

or “I am Evangelical,” is “in itself a good thing to say”, but it becomes bad where one “does this contentiously and perversely”.¹⁰⁰ This could happen, for example, if people were disciples of Christ and had heard teachings from him during his earthly ministry, but then opposed these teachings to those of the apostle Paul, opposing the author to his minister.¹⁰¹ So far the Reformer is in agreement with his Catholic opponents. Yet he holds that there are cases where one may say “I follow Christ” “Christianly and truly, and not schismatically” in a situation where one separates from others “for a just and necessary cause”.¹⁰² From a Protestant perspective, a ‘just and necessary cause’ would involve uncovering false teaching among the Church leadership—acting as one of the “pious men” Vermigli believes God uses in the oversight of his economy to recover the purity of ecclesial teaching.¹⁰³ The Protestant counter-claim here is that while Christ may have given Francis and Dominic, for example, to the Church, so that one cannot accept Christ without also receiving the gifts of Francis and Dominic, those who are named Franciscans or Dominicans act as if “Christians are an image of wards and orphans abandoned and deserted by God the Father and Christ the Lord”.¹⁰⁴ Why can they not be called Christians? Do they need another ‘lord,’ a human one? Is not God their Father?

In all this controversy, one can see how central the claim of ‘authorship’ or ‘authority’ is to the legitimacy of theological teaching. The sole ‘author’ or ‘authority’ of divine teaching is, of course, God. Human teachers, no matter how exemplary or gifted, remain only ministers of this divine economy, rather than its lords or authors. They are, to recall the Gloss on 1 Cor. 4:1, “not the Lord”.¹⁰⁵ They stand *under* the divine authority. So to belong to a theological school in such a way as to contravene this divine dispensation is a form of idolatry, attributing to a human teacher what ought to be attributed to God alone.

On the other hand, since it is God who gives all teachers to the Church, whether Scotus or Thomas or Luther or Calvin—presuming for the moment that all these are members of Christ’s Church, a presumption that, while hopeful, does bear a great deal of weight—if one were to be a ‘Calvinist’ or a ‘Thomist’ in such a way as to deny Scotus’ or

¹⁰⁰ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 23, 22.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, col. 23.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Cf. ch. 4, n. 137.

¹⁰⁴ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 27.

¹⁰⁵ See n. 35 above.

Luther's office, gift or calling within the life of the Church, it would be a denial of God's authority. If one denied the authority of any human teacher given by Christ, one would also be in rebellion against God's dispensation. Aquinas himself writes that, since only Christ's power is decisively operative in baptism (and the same holds for teaching), "Those baptized by Christ alone", which is to say, all who are baptized, "are named Christians, but those baptized by Paul are not named 'Paulines'".¹⁰⁶ Or in Vermigli's judgment, "For the pious person, it is enough if one is called 'Christian'".¹⁰⁷ To be named a Christian—and to let that be enough (*satis esse*)—represents one's humble position under God's proper authority, rather than the patronage of one or another human so-called author.

The Proper 'Use' of Teachers

Corresponding to this negative judgment, there is a positive prescription: we are to 'use' all teachers, in the sense which Augustine gives to the term. They help us in our striving toward the eternal blessedness which God the Trinity is; they aid us in our search for salvation.¹⁰⁸ While according to most of the tradition, we are only to be called by the name 'Christian,' and not to devote ourselves idolatrously to the teacher of any particular teaching, positively speaking we can and should make 'use' of whatever teachers God has given to the Church, past or present.

In 1 Cor. 3:21-22, Paul writes, "So let no one boast in human beings, for all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas... all are yours." Atto of Vercelli, commenting on this verse in the middle of the tenth century, writes, "Because all are yours, do not glory in any single one; do not defend particular teachers for yourselves but use them all. For Paul and Apollos and Cephas are yours; for they preach but one thing and they all labour for your salvation".¹⁰⁹ The Gloss, a couple centuries later, relates this specifically to the status of teachers, who are ministers and "not the givers of grace".¹¹⁰ Thus, in the words of Hervé of Bourg-Dieu, "Therefore, in Christ alone, who is above you and has supplied you with all things, is to be your glorying, not in those who are subject to

¹⁰⁶ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.2.24.

¹⁰⁷ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 16v; cf. Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 11v.

¹⁰⁸ Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 1.3.3.

¹⁰⁹ Atto of Vercelli, *PL*134: 323; cf. Gloss, col. 223; quoted in Hervé, *PL*181: 847; Lombard, *PL*191: 1563.

¹¹⁰ Gloss, col. 223; quoted in Lombard, *PL*191: 1563.

you”.¹¹¹ Since Peter, Hervé continues, who is the head of the apostles, is mentioned here by Paul, it is obvious that all ministers ‘are yours’ without exception.¹¹² All ministers are given by God to serve his people, whether Peter, Paul or Apollos, whether Aquinas, Scotus, Luther or Calvin. In fact, Calvin and Aquinas are in total agreement with this earlier exegesis. Calvin writes, employing the same language of ‘use,’ that ministers “are destined for us by God to this end, that we may use them”.¹¹³ They are ‘destined’ by God for this purpose, or as Catharinus would later write, they are “disposed by God” for our salvation.¹¹⁴ Aquinas does not pick up the Augustinian ‘use’ terminology of the earlier medieval period, but his theology is the same. He writes that the ministers of Christ “are divinely ordained for ministry to the faithful, as it says in 2 Cor. 4:5, ‘But we are your servants through Jesus’”.¹¹⁵

In all these cases, there is a clear, almost syllogistic theological argument drawn from the shape of the divine economy to the proper ‘use’ of all teachers. God has ‘given’ (Gloss¹¹⁶), ‘destined’ (Calvin), ‘disposed’ (Catharinus) or ‘ordained’ (Aquinas) ministers; these ministers are ‘given’ to serve or aid or support us in obtaining salvation; therefore, we ought to ‘use’ all those whom God has deployed in this way in order to know God. A direct implication is drawn, here as elsewhere, from the manner or disposition of God’s pedagogy to how we ought to approach the various members in this οἰκονομία. Our approach to them is also dependent on their position within the economy: we ought to ‘boast’ or ‘glory’ in God who is *above* us, the ‘author’ or ‘lord’ of our salvation, whereas we ought to ‘use’ our teachers, who are *above* us and yet are our servants, to aid us in obtaining this salvation. Teachers, as we will soon see, ought to cooperate with other ministers, who stand *alongside* them as fellow workers in the administration of God’s plan of salvation.

All ministers, de Gagny writes, “equally” belong to the faithful.¹¹⁷ Gifting is something that may come in degrees, but ordination to an ecclesial office situates all its holders in the same position; that is to say, all teachers “equally” are purposed to serve

¹¹¹ Hervé, *PL181*: 847.

¹¹² *Ibid.*; cf. Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 45v.

¹¹³ Calvin, *CO49*: 360.

¹¹⁴ Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.157.

¹¹⁵ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.3.182.

¹¹⁶ Gloss, col. 223; quoted in Hervé, *PL181*: 847; Lombard, *PL191*: 1563.

¹¹⁷ de Gagny, *Schol.*, fol. 40r.

God's people, regardless of the degree to which they are gifted to do so. As Paul states, "The one who plants and the one who waters are one" (1 Cor. 3:8). Thus, the Gloss says in comment, "Ministers are indifferent";¹¹⁸ they are, Hugh of St. Cher explains, "indifferent with regards to ministry", that is, in terms of their 'authorship,' and so, their provision of grace.¹¹⁹ Each plays their particular part in the divine economy based on God's disposing or ordaining; it has nothing to do with their own efforts or natural qualities. In truth, they 'are one.' Musculus writes, "In value they are the same, so that one is not to be preferred to another".¹²⁰ It is only God's empowering by grace, as we will shortly see, that gives 'value' to a minister's teaching.

Students should not have preferences among teachers; rather, they should 'use' them all, that is, insofar as they help them toward knowing God, that is, as God's grace is present and effective in their teaching. As Aquinas writes, "one cannot be preferred to another, except with reference to God's gift".¹²¹ In discerning (διακρίνειν) this grace, of course, students will have to judge (κρίνειν) in accordance with the character of the giver; that is, not by the standards so valuable to the world (e.g., reputation, stylishness, intelligence, academic seriousness) but according to what God values (e.g., faith, witness, power of the Spirit). "Do not judge based on the face of things, but make a just judgment" (Jn. 7:24). Students must, cleansed of pride and envy by the Spirit, look beyond the surface to the truth.

Some teachers, admittedly, are more gifted than others. But, as Nicholas of Amiens explains, this is only due to the measure of grace assigned by God to this or that person; it is not due to themselves (*ex eo*). He writes, "That the teaching or prudent foresight or working of this person is greater than another is not due to herself, that is, that she is either better or worse than another, but due to the grace assigned for the greater use of this person or the lesser of that one".¹²² As Paul writes to the Romans, "We possess diverse gifts according to the grace of God given to us.... Let us not think more highly (ὑπερφρονεῖν) than one ought, but think (φρονεῖν) in such a way as to think prudently (σωφρονεῖν), as God has measured out to each a share of faith" (12:6, 3). Our

¹¹⁸ Interlinear Gloss, col. 217; cf. Lombard, *PL*191: 1555.

¹¹⁹ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, ad. litt., fol. 79r.

¹²⁰ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 86.

¹²¹ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.1.138.

¹²² Nicholas of Amiens, *Comm. Porr.*, p.16.

excellence, or lack thereof, in particular gifts is neither our fault nor our accomplishment, but all depends on God's grace.

Since God undertakes his pedagogy in this way, "the ambition which is most inimical to unity" is excluded. Such ambition is based on a flawed understanding of the way our divine teacher has arranged his economy, and forgets, after all, that the centre of that saving economy is the cross, humble and weak.¹²³ God alone retains the 'authorship' and he alone calls teachers to their office and equips them to perform it. A failure to recognize this was, Vermigli argues, the "fount and root of all evils in the Corinthian church. They gloried arrogantly in the gifts of God, to the point of holding others in contempt and, on account of gifts divinely distributed, disdained others in favour of their own preachers and instructors". The Corinthians "failed to understand" that these gifts "both were from God, and were bestowed for the salvation of one's neighbours".¹²⁴ This arrangement of the economy is intended by God to preserve the Church's unity over against the ambition to which a different manner of dispensation could have given rise. Since all depends on God's grace, neither teacher nor student has reason to boast, whether in himself or in another.

The Unity of Teachers: Nature, Mind, Will and Heart

There were two influential interpretations of 'are one' in 1 Cor. 3:8: "The one who plants and the one who waters are one." Each identifies an important quality of the 'oneness' of ministers by which the Church's unity is preserved and enhanced. Augustine identifies a unity of nature and thought (*sentire*), while Ambrosiaster commends a unity of task. In Augustine's treatment of the verse, Paul who plants and Apollos who waters are both human beings, possessing the same nature, and both think the same, neither dissenting nor disagreeing.¹²⁵ For Ambrosiaster, this verse signifies that both are labourers hired by another, working at the same task.¹²⁶

Erasmus says along similar lines to Ambrosiaster that "the one who plants and the one who waters are in the same situation, since both equally undertake a foreign business, and will receive the reward of their duty not from you [the Corinthians], but

¹²³ Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.145.

¹²⁴ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 102v.

¹²⁵ Augustine, *trin.* 6.3; quoted in Raban Maur, *PL*112: 33; Florus of Lyons, *PL*119: 323.

¹²⁶ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 35; (mis)quoted in Raban Maur, *PL*112: 33 as "AUG."

from God for we [the apostles] are in his service”.¹²⁷ Aquinas puts more emphasis on the Augustinian themes of a unity of nature and thought (*concordia*), but includes Ambrosiaster’s unity of task through speaking of a common ministry in service to God. He also seems influenced by Nicholas of Amiens’ comments.¹²⁸ Aquinas writes, “Since they are ministers of God, possess nothing except from God and only work exteriorly, they ‘are one,’ due to the condition of their nature and by reason of their ministry. This is why, of course, one cannot be preferred to another, except with reference to God’s gift, and so as it stands with them in themselves, they ‘are one.’ And because, consequently, they ‘are one’ by a harmony of wills in their intention of ministering to God, it would be foolish to dissent from those who ‘are one’”.¹²⁹ Ministers all hold the same status before God: they possess their calling, office and gifts from God alone and bring nothing of their own that is of value for this particular task. Since teaching the divine wisdom is a divinely authored work, and one that is beyond human abilities, no one human minister may be preferred as more or less capable of fulfilling their mission, except insofar as they are gifted by God. Thus, students should only attend to the workings of grace in their teachers in order to ‘judge’ how best to ‘use’ them to serve their salvation.

Influenced by Erasmus, as the majority of the Reformers were, Reformation-era commentary is more indebted to Ambrosiaster’s portrayal of the verse than Augustine’s reading, though it is not absent. Zwingli, the earliest of the Reformed commentators, is definitive for those to follow. “All strive”, he writes, “for the same thing; all the apostles envisioned this one thing, namely, that they could lead many to Christ”.¹³⁰ Bullinger, with a similarity of language that implies borrowing, gives a more expansive description of the one aim of all the ecclesial offices. He comments, “All the offices envision this one thing, namely, that the whole Church would cling to the one God through Christ, worshipping him with a living piety. For every kind of teaching, instruction, consolation and exhortation pertains to this end. The thinking of all the apostles was the same and all strove for the same thing”.¹³¹ Despite the obvious orientation toward a common task and ministry, Bullinger notes that the apostles shared a common thinking (*sententia*), just as

¹²⁷ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 867.

¹²⁸ Cf. nn. 46, 122 above.

¹²⁹ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.1.138.

¹³⁰ Zwingli, *Ep. aliq. Pauli*, p.455; quoted in Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.193. Cf. Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 19v-20r.

¹³¹ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 29r.

Augustine argued that they thought (*sentiebant*) the same, not *dissentiens*.¹³² Calvin, as usual, is more independent in his expression than the other Reformers, but his theology is the same: “One end ought to be laid out for all, which is that they both serve one Lord and are busy with the same work”.¹³³ Elsewhere he explains, “For this is the principal matter for everyone, that they should be ministers of faith, meaning that they should acquire disciples for Christ and not for themselves”.¹³⁴ Ministers are hired for a ‘foreign business’ (Erasmus) and will be judged according to the success they bring to their master rather than to themselves. In fact, to seek their own gain, their own following of disciples, would be to shirk their designated task and make themselves lord or master.

Emphasizing this oneness of God’s workers in their different tasks is part of Paul’s effort to bring the Corinthian Christians to unity. Their fondness for particular teachers in the church had divided it into several factions, and the lengthy first four chapters of 1 Corinthians were the apostle’s effort to restore again what had been broken. In Hugh of St. Cher’s opinion, Paul wrote the whole letter “advising them toward a unity of understanding and the humility which is so very rare among people of little knowledge”.¹³⁵ Every element of Paul’s introduction serves this intent, including his tenfold repetition of the name of Christ in the first ten verses, and his address of the letter to the “church of God in Corinth..., with everyone who calls on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place” (1:2). This name ‘church’ is itself a mark of unity, according to Chrysostom. “And he calls it the ‘church of God’”, he states, “showing that there was a need for it to be united. For if it is of God, it is united and is one, not only in Corinth but in the whole world. For ‘the church’ is a name not of separation, but a name of oneness and united voice”.¹³⁶ Paul details this *συμφωνία*, this ‘united voice’ he desires for the Church, both in the city of Corinth and the whole world under God’s economy, when he introduces his request that they all ‘speak the same.’

There the apostle writes, “I ask of you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same, and that there would not be divisions among you, but that you would be perfect in the same mind and in the same judgment (*γνώμη*;

¹³² Cf. n. 125 above.

¹³³ Calvin, *CO*49:351.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, col. 349; cf. Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.58.

¹³⁵ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, fol. 72v, following the reading *rarissima* here instead of *charisissima* in the earlier printing (*Rep. apostil.*, fol. 66r).

¹³⁶ Chrysostom, *Hom.* 1.1, PG61: 13.

sententia)” (1 Cor. 1:10). Thus, Paul presses his listeners to agree not only in speech but even in thought, in mental judgment. This twofold unity would give rise to numerous reflections on the verbal, intellectual and even affective unity the apostle desired of the Church, and particularly her teachers. Musculus, for instance, takes the phrase ‘to speak the same’ to mean “to profess the same teaching and not to disagree over varying opinions, to be at one with what another says, in the same judgment”.¹³⁷ Theologians, in other words, should hold to the same teaching as others and not offer idiosyncratic opinions; they should be ‘at one’ with the teaching of others, insofar as they can perceive its truthfulness. This should not only be a verbal agreement, but also an agreement ‘in the same judgment,’ intellectually grasping the correctness of others’ teaching. For the Gloss, to ‘speak the same’ means “by the confession of your mouth, and that you hold [the same] inwardly in your heart”.¹³⁸ This latter concern for an inward unanimity of hearts was, for most of the tradition, the particular problem in Corinth: not, that is, that there was a difference in words between the teachers but that their hearts were divided.

Chrysostom is especially clear and precise on this point: “For because he said, ‘that you speak the same,’ you should not think, [Paul] is saying, that I said unanimity goes only as far as words. For I seek from thought a united voice”. Chrysostom continues, “And there are those who possess a united voice in their thoughts who do not yet possess it in judgment. It is similar to when, having the same faith, we are not bound together in love. For we are united in our thoughts in this way, for we think the same, but not yet in judgment. This, therefore, happens as each then chooses this or that person”.¹³⁹ It seems that in Corinth, each of the teachers was professing the same truth but they were teaching it in a disunited way, each seeking their own fame and reputation. This is why Calvin can say that “false apostles had entered who did not trouble the church with openly impious teachings”, but instead with an impious method of teaching.¹⁴⁰ The words were the same, but their hearts were divided; their understanding sounded as a single voice, but their affections were a cacophony of opposing summons. Hugh of St. Cher, in this vein, identifies “the conflict of affections” as a source of division in the church at

¹³⁷ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 17.

¹³⁸ Interlinear Gloss, col. 197-98.

¹³⁹ Chrysostom, *Hom.* 3.1, PG61: 23.

¹⁴⁰ Calvin, *argumentum*, CO49: 297.

Corinth.¹⁴¹ According to Aquinas, they needed a unity not only of understanding, by which we make judgments about what we know, but also of will, by which we decide what to do.¹⁴² The forces of division, in other words, were not so much external but internal, the very faculties by which we lead our lives. The teachers in Corinth were united on an intellectual level, but not yet on a moral one.

Calvin, unusually, is conceptually at one with the exegesis of Aquinas, likely by way of Chrysostom. The Reformer explains, “For ‘judgment’ Paul uses γνώμην, but I take it here to mean ‘will,’ as an integral part of the soul, and indeed the first term [‘mind’] refers to faith and the other to love. Therefore, Christian unity will then be established among us, when we not only well agree in teaching, but also are at peace in our efforts and wills, and so are of one soul in everything. Luke renders testimony to the faithful of the first church in this way, that ‘they had one heart and one soul’ (Acts 4:32). And surely this will be found wherever the Spirit of Christ will reign”.¹⁴³ For the teaching of theology to bring about unity in the Church, then, will require not simply a unified confession, but also a unity of will and desire. Mere liturgical or confessional uniformity is not true unity unless the Church brings to it a single heart, a reality effected only by the Spirit.

The verse from Acts chosen by Calvin to describe ecclesial unity bears interesting implications. In this passage, Luke narrates how the early Church not only shared a common faith, but also common possessions, and acted together to evangelize and provide for the poor. They were united, as Aquinas would say, in will, about what is to be done (*agendis*) as well as in knowledge or understanding, about what is to be believed (*cognoscendis*). Wherever the Spirit of Christ reigns, wherever he is humbly followed as the true Teacher in the Church, there can be a unity of love among teachers and their students, the “love of God poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who is given to us” (Rom. 5:5). Where the promptings of the Spirit are not heeded, however, and his formation of our hearts is resisted, sinful movements of our affections can arise, destructive affections by which the Church is divided.

This distinction between intellectual unity and affective unity is reflected in the traditional distinction between heresy and schism: the former is an intellectual failure, a

¹⁴¹ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, fol. 73v.

¹⁴² Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.2.23; cf. Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 37r.

¹⁴³ Calvin, CO49: 314. Cf. Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 20.

defect regarding what we believe, while the latter is a moral failure, a defect in our love for one another. According to Atto of Vercelli, the real problem in Corinth was not heresy but schism, a lack of “brotherly love”, because “they erred, divided not only by the opinions of various teachers, but also against certain other people, as if they were shown to be worse”.¹⁴⁴ Pride led them to despise those who displayed lesser or fewer gifts associated with the false criteria they held as standards of teaching in the world. They failed to embrace the humility Paul was attempting to instill in them by pointing to the weakness and foolishness of the cross; they failed to love one another.

Denis the Carthusian, always sensitive to spiritual truths, recalls Hosea 10:2, “Their heart is divided and now they perish.” But this, he says, seems to contradict another prophetic word from Joel 2:13, “Rend your hearts and not your garments.” Denis notes that Joel “speaks of a spiritual circumcision of the heart, and an opening, by which the heart, formerly hard, opens to the word of God and accepts it”.¹⁴⁵ Denis does not explicitly connect Joel’s prophecy to Paul’s ecclesial situation, but the implications follow quite beautifully. To prevent an external rending of the Church community, we should ‘rend our hearts’ in sorrow for our sins, embracing the humility and opening our hearts to the one, unifying Word of God. Rending our hearts is a necessary step toward receiving the love God gives us in his Word, the crucified Christ, and it enables us to give out this love to others, not as an arrogant false love, but a true and humble one. Opening our hearts allows us to embrace Christ and be united to him.

To be united with Christ implies a unity with one another. Sebastian Meyer, with syllogistic simplicity, writes in Paul’s voice that “those who truly are of Christ are one among themselves, in the way that Christ is one; you [Corinthians] are divided, and therefore either you are not truly of Christ or Christ is divided in himself; this latter is impossible, and therefore you are not truly of Christ, unless you return to unity”.¹⁴⁶ Meyer’s logic is, of course, correct. Earlier we saw claims from Aquinas and Calvin about tearing Christ to pieces or making many Christs along the same lines. Arrogating authorship to one or another human teacher would be to divide the one Christ; likewise, division in theological confession is a way of rending the body. It is for this reason that

¹⁴⁴ Atto of Vercelli, *PL*134: 295.

¹⁴⁵ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 37r.

¹⁴⁶ Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 4v.

Calvin insists strongly that “there not appear any diversity in speech”,¹⁴⁷ at least in substance if not in expression.

In 1 Cor. 4:17, Paul tells the church that he is sending Timothy who will “remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” Just as the church in Corinth is one with those who everywhere in every church call on Jesus (1:2), Paul’s teaching is everywhere the same. Musculus takes this to mean that “the teacher of truth changes nothing. He constantly teaches the same truth of Christ everywhere.... We are to note in this verse what ways we must take to enter upon Christ, if we wish to think and work with the Church¹⁴⁸ apostolic and catholic. Indeed, they are those the apostle of Christ taught constantly ‘everywhere in every church.’ And what he taught his writings witness”.¹⁴⁹ According to Musculus, the letters of Paul—and, it is fair to extrapolate, the Scriptures in general—exhibit the kind of unity that is sought in the teaching of theology. This is, the reader of the Bible knows, not an exact verbal uniformity, but rather a richly harmonious voice. In inspiring the words of Scripture, God our teacher has, in his economy, passed onto us a model for our own speech about him.

At the same time, however, as theologians are required to express their teaching in unity with one another, they and their students live, Musculus argues at the time of the Reformation, with freedom of conscience. He writes:

This I would desire, from my heart, that since in this our age the captivity of consciences is loosed and everywhere one judges and thinks freely about our faith and the things of religion and people freely read and exposit Holy Scripture, for which reason judgments necessarily vary, this far at least let us protect unity in the Church, that we may be of one and the same heart and soul in Christ the Lord and truly love one another, nor judge and condemn anyone differing from us in certain things. For it is totally wrong, therefore, to condemn a brother because he thinks freely nor vows obedience to the words of any teacher, whoever they may be, except Christ, while we see those who, condemning others who disagree with them, are using this right of freedom that they may subject their judgment to no one’s power but retain it free.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Calvin, CO49: 314.

¹⁴⁸ Musculus’ phrase *sentire & facere cum ecclesia* recalls the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola, written in 1522-24. An early Latin edition, *Exercitia spiritualia* (Vienna, 1563), fol. 136v titles the relevant section, “Regulae Aliquot seruandae, ut cum orthodoxa Ecclesia uere sentiamus.”

¹⁴⁹ Musculus, *obseruatio* i, *Comm.*, col. 126.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, col. 20.

This plea of Musculus, when taken with his comments on the unity required of teachers of theology, seems to imply an understanding of the economy in which we come to unity on theological positions not by concession to or conversation with one another, but by individually looking to Christ the one Teacher. As each theologian learns from Christ, she learns to 'speak the same' as each of the others. This does not, however, happen by mutual conversation or instruction from higher levels of the human magisterium: for Musculus, this would imply the loss of freedom and an undue obedience to people in place of Christ.

Aquinas, as we will see below, argues that students of theology are, in fact, bound to obey human teachers 'as they would Christ', since as delegate authorities of Christ's teaching they dispense the wisdom that leads us to know God. Of course, Aquinas was able to identify the proper human authorities because they could be traced by a lineage of apostolic succession: pastor-teachers were ordained by legitimate bishops. (Aquinas' own teaching at Saint-Jacques in Paris had ecclesiastical approval through the Dominican order, and eventually, the Pope himself.¹⁵¹) For Calvin and the other Reformers, however, this was no longer judged a sufficient means of discernment. Rather, Calvin would argue, as we saw above, that Christ 'alone should reign in the Church,' a reign he exercises by the preaching of the Word and his Spirit. Wherever the Spirit of Christ is, Calvin states, there will be found the bonds of unity, not only intellectual unity but also a unity of affection and mission.

Once again we are faced with a Reformation-era problematic (typified by Vermigli and Origen in the last chapter). Musculus, and Calvin with him, would oppose Aquinas' insistence on the obedience due to teachers of the Church. This is because, again, of variant understandings of how God undertakes his work of pedagogy. For Aquinas, human ministers are entrusted by God with the teachings that lead to salvation; thus, obedience to their instruction is necessary in coming to know God. The Reformers, on the other hand, contend that theologians can err—and have erred—and unity in the truth is only certain if all together look to God our one teacher as he speaks his wisdom in the Scriptures. All, however, agree that it is not a theologian's act of teaching that is decisive, but God's inner teaching of students. Human teachers might be due a form of obedience

¹⁵¹ Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, *The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal, rev. ed. (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), p.19 n. 8; p.50.

because of the position God has given them, but this is only because the Spirit uses them in this position to instruct us in divine wisdom.

Our Outward and God's Inward Teaching

God teaches through his chosen ministers in a particular way in the economy: ministers 'only work exteriorly,' as Aquinas states, while God's work is interior. Cajetan comments, again on 1 Cor. 3:8, that the planter and the waterer "'are one' in the goal toward which they strive. For both strive for the work which God inwardly works".¹⁵² Aquinas explains, in language both brief and precise: "For they are nothing but the ministers of God, and do not possess anything except from God, and only work exteriorly, with God working interiorly.... The action, therefore, is not to be ascribed to the instrument, to which the minister may be compared, but to the principal agent", which, here as elsewhere, is God.¹⁵³ In the economy of the divine pedagogy, the manner of the divine teacher's working is constitutive of all other, creaturely workings. In the act of teaching, the theologian's action is an exterior, dependent action, whereas God's action is interior and independent.

This understanding works its way into the tradition by means of phrases borrowed from Gregory the Great. Speaking of God, Gregory says, "He sounds his voice outwardly through the apostles, but enlightens the hearts of his hearers within by himself".¹⁵⁴ Here we see the distinction and coordination between God's interior teaching and the human teacher's exterior work. Another saying of Gregory's was to have a more substantial afterlife: "No one, therefore, should attribute what they understand from the mouth of their teacher to the person teaching, because unless the One who teaches is present inwardly, the tongue of the teacher labours in emptiness outwardly".¹⁵⁵ Atto of Vercelli gives this expression in the form in which it will eventually reach Aquinas via Hugh of St. Cher: "For the speech of the preacher labours in vain outwardly unless the grace of the Spirit, who teaches the mind inwardly, is present".¹⁵⁶ This was often combined with

¹⁵² Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 44v.

¹⁵³ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.1.137; cf. Nicholas of Lyra, col. 206.

¹⁵⁴ Gregory, *Mor.* 27.23; quoted in Raban Maur, *PL*112: 32.

¹⁵⁵ Gregory the Great, *HEv.* 2.30.3.

¹⁵⁶ Atto of Vercelli, *PL*134: 291; cf. Robert of Melun, *Qu. ep. Pauli*, p.183; Lombard, *PL*191: 1555; Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, exp. gloss., fol. 78v. Cf. still further, Aquinas, *In Pss.* 37.2, *Parma* 14: 291; idem, *In Matt.* 4.2.370.

Augustine's theology of Christ as the interior teacher to produce statements such as the following by Hervé of Bourg-Dieu: "He who created you, and redeemed and called you through faith and the Holy Spirit, lives in you, and unless he speaks to you inwardly, we clamour without cause. 'Therefore, it is the teacher within who teaches. Christ teaches, his inspiration teaches, and where his inspiration and his anointing are not present, the words resound outwardly and emptily'".¹⁵⁷ Thus, it is Christ and/or the Spirit who is the interior teacher, speaking to the heart of the listener and enlightening them to understand the words of the preacher. Without this inspiration, the outward words will remain incomprehensible: "for they are foolishness to him, and he is not able to understand them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). Christ and the Spirit empower the outer speech of the teacher to have its interior effect in faith or in understanding. Thus, the efficacy of this joint divine-human action is due to the divine agent alone, even as God uses human agency to achieve this purpose.

It is Nicholas of Amiens, writing in the late twelfth century, who gives the most detailed account of this dual agency, one worth rehearsing at some length. In 1 Cor. 3:7, Paul writes, "So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who gives the increase." This immediately causes a difficulty, according to Nicholas, because "God could in no way give this increase unless Paul or someone else preached.... Nor, in addition, could God give someone faith without Paul, for example, preaching". This is why, Nicholas argues, Paul writes in Romans 10:14, "But how would they believe in the one they have not heard of?".¹⁵⁸ Of course, it can happen miraculously that people come to faith without a preached message, just as some will, extraordinarily, be saved without baptism. Yet—and here is Nicholas' key insight—God is as much the author of Paul's preaching or Apollos' baptizing as he is of the increase worked in that preaching or baptizing.¹⁵⁹ In the economy, both the inner work and the outer work are of his authoring.

Now we find ourselves, however, in the opposite difficulty: if God is equally the author of preaching as of the increase produced through it, why is it said that Paul

¹⁵⁷ Hervé, *PL*181: 839-40; the second sentence is Augustine, *ep. lo. tr.* 3; quoted in Florus of Lyons, *PL*119: 323. The first sentence of Hervé, his own, is quoted by Hoffmeister, *In utr. ad Cor. Hom.*, p.35. Cf. Gloss, col. 216; quoted in Pellikan, p.193.

¹⁵⁸ Nicholas of Amiens, *Comm. Porr.*, p.42.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

preaches and God gives the increase? Does not God do both? Nicholas' reply, though he does not use the term, is an argument from 'fittingness' (*conuenientia*). Paul preaches because "to strike the ears" is "bodily" and belongs to Paul as a body (while remaining a gift of God), whereas the inward giving of faith, which is "spiritual", belongs to God who is spirit.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, Paul is "something" with regard to the ministry,¹⁶¹ though he is not its author and cannot effect the interior grace of belief; this 'something' is the external, bodily ministry of Paul's preaching. Although as much authored by God as the spiritual effecting of belief interiorly in the hearer, this external teaching acts as a kind of bodily prevenient grace!¹⁶² It precedes the interior grace and is in fact a necessary prerequisite to it, while still remaining itself a grace—an external, bodily grace.

Nicholas continues, "It is as if to say that even this movement by which a person is moved to speak, in fact any movement at all by which anyone is moved to 'do anything,' that is, the speaking itself, the doing itself, is not from a person, a person does not possess from himself. For in the same way as a human being is nothing of himself, nothing at all comes from him. For in the same way as a human being cannot be God, by nature he is, I say, in this way not the author of anything, since to him alone belongs the authorship of all things whose nature alone is divinity alone. 'It is not of them,' from them, though, from God the author, it may be theirs".¹⁶³ Thus, he can even say, "We give the increase, not that we give it, but that another gives in us, so to speak, making and giving us to give".¹⁶⁴ Nicholas' exacting analysis of God's relationship to his creation and the outworking of his οἰκονομία allows him to draw the proper lines between 'authorship' and 'ministry,' between the external means which acts as a kind of material prevenient grace, itself authored by God our teacher, and the internal spiritual working of God which can act with or without external means, though in the usual course of his pedagogy, through what he has ordained.

One finds nothing quite as detailed in the Reformation era commentaries; there is, however, a substantial theological difference between the Reformers and their medieval predecessors which underlies this. While Nicholas sees a coherence, a kind of 'fittingness'

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p.44. Cf. n. 46 above.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p.47.

between God's chosen means and the ends for which he uses them, Calvin's explanation points to the bare fact of God's ordination. When Calvin comes to the same section of Paul's letter as Nicholas, 1 Cor. 3:6, he writes, "But see in this verse how necessary the preaching of the word is, and how necessary its continuation. It would clearly not be any more difficult for God to bless the earth without human industry,... but since God has so ordained it, that a person should work, and the earth respond to its cultivation, we act accordingly. Nothing thus impedes God such that he is unable to awaken faith in the sleeping, if he wished, without the work of human beings, but he has decreed otherwise, namely, that 'faith is born of hearing' (Rom. 10:17)".¹⁶⁵

Calvin provides no principle, as Nicholas did, to explain the relationship of God's inner, divine action to the outer, human work of preaching; rather, he simply asserts that 'God has so ordained it' and so 'decreed' as to use preaching in this way, even though nothing impedes him from doing otherwise. A little is added to this explanation when he elaborates on 1 Cor. 3:7, asking why the planter and waterer are called "nothing":

Paul tends to speak in two ways of ministers, as of the sacraments.... For sometimes he considers the minister as ordained by God for first regenerating and then nourishing souls to eternal life.... But other times he considers the minister as a servant, not the Lord; as the tool, not the hand; as, finally, a human being, not God. And then nothing is left to them besides a work, and indeed a dead and hollow work of action, unless the Lord renders it efficacious by his Spirit. The reason is that, where the ministry is concerned, we must not only consider the human being, but also God acting in them through the grace of the Spirit: not because the grace of the Spirit is forever tied to the word of a human being, but because Christ bares his power in this way, in the ministry instituted by him, in order that it would not appear to have been instituted in vain. In this way, nothing is either subtracted or taken from him because it is transferred to a human being, for neither does he separate himself from the minister, but rather his efficacious power is preached in the person of the minister.¹⁶⁶

Thus, the human work of preaching is both 'nothing' and 'necessary.' It is nothing because its efficacy depends entirely on the inward work of the Spirit gracing it with his power, and not at all on the human agent undertaking it; it is necessary because this is where God has chosen, 'ordained' or 'decreed' to bare his power through Christ. Thus, Calvin argues, "Whoever, therefore, is confident of coming to faith while disregarding this means, acts the same as a farmer who, tossing away their plough, neglecting to sow and

¹⁶⁵ Calvin, *CO49*: 350.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, cols. 350-51.

abandoning all cultivation, stands wide-eyed asking for pasture from heaven”.¹⁶⁷ God can and does, Nicholas would agree, sometimes cause things to bear fruit without any creaturely means, but the ordinary—and ‘ordained’—course of affairs is for God to work inwardly through Christ and the Spirit to bring efficacy to the commissioned work of his ministers.

Both Calvin and Nicholas reflect on the ability of God to produce faith in a person without external means; both draw on Paul’s reflections in Romans 10 to do so. But their methods of theological argument and their conclusions differ. For Nicholas, it is fitting that a bodily effect (preaching) be produced by a body (Paul) and a spiritual effect (faith) be produced by a spirit (God); each is “adapted” to their end.¹⁶⁸ Even if Nicholas’ account might be better served by replacing ‘body’ and ‘spirit’ with ‘creature’ and ‘Creator’ respectively—God can and does, of course, make use of bodily effects as much as spiritual ones, even if ultimately spiritual effects are more fitting for God, who is immaterial¹⁶⁹—there is still an effort to understand God’s activity more deeply, to grasp its coherence and intention. In Calvin, one finds instead the principle that ‘God has so ordained it’; he has ‘decreed’ that preaching is ‘necessary’ for bringing people to faith, but without any indication of why this rather than anything else should be put to use. Calvin’s *ita ordinavit* is a moral, but not an intellectual, principle: ‘we do so’ because the preaching of the word is ‘necessary’ by God’s decree, not because it is understandably appropriate for God to do his divine work in conjunction with *this*, and not another, little creaturely work.

Returning, then, to the course of Gregory’s influence in the history of exegesis, we find that the commentators of the later middle ages have little to add, characterizing ministers as working externally “ministerially”¹⁷⁰ or “instrumentally”.¹⁷¹ Even in 1546, Meyer can write words that sound six hundred years old: “But they do these things in vain, unless the Lord flows into, changes and carries hearts by his Spirit”.¹⁷² This influential traditional theology does, however, take on new meaning in the context of the Reformation. In a climate where much emphasis is given to the preaching of the external word (*verbum externum*), Gregory’s teaching and its successors provide an important

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., col. 350.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. n. 160 above.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Augustine, *trin.* 3.

¹⁷⁰ Nicholas of Lyra, col. 216.

¹⁷¹ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 40v.

¹⁷² Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 19v.

qualifier. Bullinger, for instance, commenting once again on Paul's metaphor of the planter and waterer, writes, "They labour in vain who sow the seed of the lordly Word in the field of hearts, unless a most-high power touches these hearts and renders them able to receive the seed and bear fruit. Again, they labour in vain who would calm the seething breast with pious admonitions and heartfelt comfort, unless the hidden power of the Spirit inwardly seizes and transforms their mind.... So this verse most fittingly undoes the error of those who attribute far too much to the external word".¹⁷³ Zwingli will similarly claim that "remission of sins does not happen by preaching, but by the power of God and the death of Christ, which is presented sensibly through the preached word. For the apostles, besides the external word, bring forth nothing".¹⁷⁴ Even to accomplish the movement to speak, as we have learned from Nicholas, is itself a gift of God's authoring.

But this is not, of course, to say that the external word is useless. Hoffmeister, a Catholic, comes to its defence with an argument that is remarkably close to Calvin in its logic: "Therefore, however much it is solely God's to give the increase, the external word of God is nevertheless not preached in vain. For if the external preaching of the word is nothing, why would the apostle say, 'He who ascended above all the heavens that he might fill all things, gave some as apostles, some as prophets, others as evangelists, others teachers and pastors for the perfection of the saints...'? Christ, then, makes use of the external preaching of the word, not because he cannot do otherwise, but because such pleases him".¹⁷⁵

Once again, we see an argument from the dispensation of the divine economy. Since God has ordained the preaching of the external word, it is clear that this was no empty command; no word of God is void. The offices that God has given to the Church all serve their particular purposes within the grander intention of bringing humanity to salvation in Christ. Attending to these ministers, then, is 'necessary,' as Calvin argues, even as in themselves they are 'nothing.' Though each is, in Aquinas' language, only the 'instrument,' and not the 'principal agent,' they are the instrument through which God does such wondrous things as birthing faith, kindling love and instructing us in the knowledge of God. As Haymo says, "They are stewards through whose ministry one

¹⁷³ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 28v-29r.

¹⁷⁴ Zwingli, *Ep. aliq. Pauli*, p.451.

¹⁷⁵ Hoffmeister, *In utr. ad Cor. Hom.* p.36.

comes to eternal salvation”.¹⁷⁶ Students, then, are to give thanks to God for what they learn from their teachers, knowing that without grace teaching can only achieve the human effects of persuasion and epistemic conviction, rather than the divine effects of faith and coming close to God.

The Delegated Authority of Teachers

For this reason, Hoffmeister can say that Paul presents himself as an apostle in 1 Cor. 1:1, “in order that the church may know that the teaching of Paul is to be believed as if it were the voice of God sounding from heaven”.¹⁷⁷ Calvin, similarly, emphasizes the authority bestowed on the apostle’s teaching by God’s commission. “Paul”, by this use of the word ‘apostle’ in 1:1, “tacitly affirms that all those who attempt to undo his apostleship, or in any way attack him, are fighting against the ordination of God”.¹⁷⁸ For he is, as Paul affirms of himself, an apostle “by the will of God” (1:1). It is this *θέλημα θεοῦ* which is decisive for the status of Paul as an apostle, as well as teachers and other ministers in the Church through the ages. It is God’s authorship and authority that gives the ecclesial offices their own, derivative authority. Aquinas will thus argue that obedience to the ministers of the Church is actually necessary to salvation; esteeming them as “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (4:1) is necessary in this way, “for unless they acknowledge them as ministers of Christ, they will not obey them as they would Christ”.¹⁷⁹ They ought to obey them ‘as they would Christ,’ because it is through them that Christ teaches his people his saving wisdom.

Finally, then, in our schematic the teachers and other ministers of the Church take up their place *below* God’s authority and *above* those to whom they are called to minister—*above* in the same way the earthly Christ was above his disciples: “For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his soul for the ransom of many” (Mk. 10:45). Theologians, thus, occupy a space between God and his students. They are positioned, according to Aquinas (and Vermigli¹⁸⁰), between “Christ, whom they serve”, and “his members, to whom they give out God’s gifts”, his “spiritual teachings” or

¹⁷⁶ Haymo, *PL*117: 529-30; quoted in Gloss, col. 224; Lombard, *PL*191: 1565; Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, exp. gloss., fol. 81v.

¹⁷⁷ Hoffmeister, *In utr. ad Cor. Hom.*, p.2.

¹⁷⁸ Calvin, *CO*49: 306.

¹⁷⁹ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 4.1.187.

¹⁸⁰ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 89r.

sacraments.¹⁸¹ In other words, God’s teachers act as mediators, sharing divine wisdom with the Church. As they fulfill this function in the economy, they are blessed to reflect his enlightening power. In Hugh of St. Cher’s apt formulation, “Just as Christ is light, the apostles are also light. But Christ is a light which only enlightens, while the apostles are both a light which enlightens and a light which is enlightened. Or to say the same thing, Christ is a foundation which only founds, while the apostles are founded foundations, and found [others] not upon themselves, but upon Christ”.¹⁸²

Teachers have a very important and exalted role within the economy of salvation, one to which they must be called by divine authority. Aquinas reminds us of the dignity of this calling in the words of the letter to the Hebrews, “No one takes this honour upon himself, but is called to it by God, just as Aaron was” (5:4).¹⁸³ One must be faithful in fulfilling God’s commission, and not act in ambition, pride or presumption, but rather in humility, which, as Aquinas notes, is represented by the meaning of Paul’s name in Latin (*paulus*, ‘little’).¹⁸⁴ Thus, becoming a theologian demands an appropriate fear and trembling, a recognition of one’s own littleness—or rather, nothingness. “Not many of you”, James says, “should become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive greater judgment” (3:1). With salvation in the balance, we are called to perform a duty with an infinite weight, because of which Paul lived in constant anxiety for all the churches (2 Cor. 11:28). The apostle was not concerned with human judgment—not even his own—but only with God’s judgment of how faithfully he fulfilled the commission given him by Christ for the sake of the gospel.

To be a teacher of God’s wisdom one must shape his or her life in accordance with God’s intentions, yielding up one’s ideas of one’s own life for God’s ideas. God calls theologians, as all Christians, to a definite form of life aligned with who he himself is—in Calvin’s phrase, God is “the straightedge to which we must be shaped”.¹⁸⁵ In God’s hands, teachers are his ‘instruments’ (Aquinas) or ‘tools’ (Calvin) by which he accomplishes the end of his economy, bringing his children to know him. This requires a divesting of the pride and self-confidence that attends success (or failure). Each must examine his or her

¹⁸¹ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 4.1.186.

¹⁸² Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, exp. gloss., fol. 74r.

¹⁸³ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.1.5.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.1.4.

¹⁸⁵ Calvin, *Inst.* 1.1.2; McNeill-Battles, 1: 38; CO2: 33.

own heart to detect whether one is resistant or pliable to God's plans, intentions which may well be different from those one envisions for one's own life. It is courage and perseverance in this determination that characterizes Paul's statement, at once self-conscious and conscious of the divine economy: "For I am not aware of anything in myself, but I am not justified in that—the one who examines me is the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:4).

Conclusion

It is no light matter to be made a theologian by God. To be "called to be an apostle"—or a teacher—"of Jesus Christ by the will of God" (1 Cor. 1:1) involves many reorientations, some more radical than others. For those who have already been good students of the divine pedagogy, these reorientations will be less painful: less will be excised from one's self by the Spirit who exposes our sin (cf. Jn. 16:8). Students who are practiced in humility, and so wary of the proud and envious inflation of their hearts, are better prepared to take up the position of teaching others in Christ's school and the authority that comes with it. People who become theologians are raised up to an advanced position in the economy of God's teaching as God makes a special and strict use of their gifts.

"We are God's helpers", Hoffmeister writes, "not in that he needs our works, but that we need his".¹⁸⁶ He who created all things could teach his people without creaturely means. Yet, whether fitting or no, God does, in fact, make his people wise by means of human teachers. Christ, incarnate wisdom of God, gives teachers to the Church; the Spirit within these teachers and their listeners gives light to understand words of true wisdom to speak. This gift correspondingly demands that we acknowledge our particular standing within the divine οἰκονομία, facing boldly the promise and the danger, and that we perform our duty in the right way and display the proper qualities of character. It entails, in other words, not only a striving for the servanthood and unity befitting our status, but also the pursuit of the method and virtues consistent with theology's identity as the teaching of divine wisdom. For theologians live in light of the eventual judgment of Christ upon one's faithfulness to his calling.

¹⁸⁶ Hoffmeister, *In utr. ad Cor. Hom.*, p.37.

Chapter Six | The Method and Judgment of God's Teachers

"The teaching of the gospel, therefore, is speaking what has been given us by God.
Whoever does not provide this foremost part of teaching acts as less than a teacher of the gospel."
— Wolfgang Musculus

The economy of divine teaching enacts, by God's authority and lordship, the calling, gifting and enabling of theologians. Christ calls and sends; the Spirit empowers and enlightens both student and teacher. In the act and process of teaching theology, there is a certain method of teaching appropriate to the material, as well as certain qualities of that teaching, considered both as an act and as a material content, by which it is evaluated. In Paul's words, "one searches among the stewards to find one who is faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). God continues, of course, to be involved in the economy beyond the making of theologians. As they instruct students through the course of their lives, the Spirit provides them with words to speak; as they finish their course, they pass on before the judgment seat of Christ, who can determine more truly than any other whether they have been faithful in their service.

The Problem of Method

Aquinas and Calvin, among others, identified one of Paul's concerns with the false apostles in Corinth as their method of teaching. The Corinthian teachers seemed to be using philosophy or rhetoric in order to draw followers after themselves, using a "wisdom of words (σοφία λόγου)" and thereby emptying the cross of its power (1:17). As we have seen, Aquinas argues that "any method of teaching is most inappropriate for a subject when, by means of such a method, that which is most important in that subject is undone". And "what is most important in the teaching of Christian faith is the salvation accomplished by the cross of Christ. This is why 1 Cor. 2:2 says, 'I made a decision to know nothing among you, except Jesus Christ and him crucified.' But whoever while teaching relies principally on the 'wisdom of words,' in and of itself, empties the cross of Christ. Therefore, teaching 'in a wisdom of words' is not an appropriate method for the Christian faith".¹ Teaching as the false apostles were, by relying on philosophy or rhetoric, is "corruptive of the faith" because it relies not on the power of God who revealed it but on human ingenuity and understanding, which is a crumbling, mortal basis for the teaching

¹ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.3.45.

of eternal and incorruptible wisdom.² It also, according to many of the Reformers, eschewed the simplicity which is natural to the preaching of the gospel.

Erasmus' influential paraphrases emphasized this gospel simplicity. For instance, he reworks 1 Cor. 1:25, "Is not the foolishness of God wiser than human wisdom?," to say, "What is simpler or more down-to-earth (*popularius*) than the gospel teaching?"³ For Bullinger, and Calvin following him, the main fault of the Corinthian teachers was abandoning this gospel simplicity for their own contrived form of teaching. According to Bullinger, the false teachers "disdained the pure teaching of the gospel for its simplicity (as too did the Corinthians) and boasted in I know not what spirit, to which they added a strange new rhetoric, besides that which the common way of speaking recognizes, and a new method of preaching".⁴ Calvin argues along similar lines that they "thought up a new method of teaching foreign to the simplicity of Christ, by which to arouse admiration for them".⁵ In other words, they abused rhetoric in order to gain followers eager to hear their eloquent speeches rather than to be nourished by their healing teaching about the salvation found in the cross. They, Musculus argues, "introduced both a new teaching and a new form of teaching, which would be plausible to human wisdom".⁶ Rather than striving to perform their duty in faithfulness to God's calling, they set out to serve themselves and their own ends. Thus, instead of teaching as an instrument of the Holy Spirit, they boasted, as Bullinger puts it, 'in I know not what spirit.'

Knowledge and Ability

In order to teach, one needs both the knowledge of what is to be taught and the ability to teach it in accordance with proper method. Musculus notes that this applies to God as well as to us. This, for him, is the significance of Paul's teaching that the Spirit searches the "deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:10): he knows all things, and so is able to reveal them to us.⁷ As we saw in the first chapter, that *God* is a teacher means that, unlike creatures, he has it in himself to teach us and needs no instruction from others. God does not become wise, but eternally has and is wisdom in the person of the Son. It is him whom

² Ibid., 1.3.43.

³ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 863; quoted in Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.185.

⁴ Bullinger, *Comm.*, *praefatio*, fol. 2v.

⁵ Calvin, *argumentum*, CO49: 298-99.

⁶ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 34.

⁷ Ibid., col. 64.

the Father teaches us by sending him into the world in the womb of Mary as the Spirit overshadows her.

Human teachers, by the same token, need both knowledge of God as well as technique in communicating it. In 1 Cor. 1:5, Paul gives thanks the Corinthians “have been enriched in all things in Christ, in all speech (λόγῳ) and in all knowledge.” Earlier commentators, as we saw before, connected these two gifts especially with knowledge of the Scriptures. Cassiodorus and Haymo of Auxerre both refer these gifts to knowledge of the Old and New Testaments;⁸ an interlinear gloss says more generally, “in the understanding of the Scriptures”.⁹ Thus, teachers are ‘enriched’ with the knowledge they need to teach by receiving a spiritual understanding of the Scriptures. Lombard seems the first to connect enrichment “in all speech (Vulg. *in omni verbo*)” with the ability either to speak in other languages (cf. 1 Cor. 14:1-19) or to preach in different ways according to the varying abilities of listeners.¹⁰ Aquinas rephrases Lombard’s understanding of preaching to students of differing capacities by speaking of “abounding in words of teaching”, but adds an important extension to the tradition: to be ‘enriched in all knowledge’ is to be enriched “in the understanding of all the Scriptures, and universally of all those things which relate to salvation”.¹¹ Aquinas reconnects these gifts to their divinely intended end, as well as to each other.¹² We are enriched in every gift in Christ that we might know what saves us, understanding the Scriptures which are “able to make you wise for salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15).

Later medieval and Reformation-era Catholic accounts would carry on Aquinas’ understanding. Cajetan, for instance, wrote that the Corinthians “abounded in knowledge of holy things and speech about the same. And the perfection of teaching resides in these two gifts”.¹³ Catharinus, in addition, highlights the connectedness of the gifts, as Aquinas had done. “It is not enough for teaching others”, he comments, “to have an eloquence of words without at the same time knowledge being present. Nor yet would knowledge be of help unless there was present the ability to express and pass on the knowledge of the

⁸ Cassiodorus, *PL*68: 507; Haymo, *PL*117: 510.

⁹ Interlinear Gloss, col. 197-98.

¹⁰ Lombard, *PL*191: 1536; cf. Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, ad. litt., fol. 73r.

¹¹ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 1.1.13; quoted in Nicholas of Lyra, col. 197; cf. Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 36v.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 40v.

word. Therefore, a teacher is perfected by these two things”.¹⁴ These two gifts together, knowledge of God’s wisdom and the ability to teach it to others, are needed in order to serve the purpose for which God gives them, bringing humanity to knowledge of the salvation to be found in him. Vermigli, a Reformer more willingly influenced by Catholic thinking in some respects, seems the only Protestant to take up this tradition of commentary. He notes that here Paul “especially makes mention, among all the spiritual gifts, of those two which are most of all adapted to building the Church.... For you see very many of the faithful who have knowledge of saving realities, but they cannot express what they perceive”.¹⁵ The possession of knowledge is the gift of both teachers and students, but in order to teach in the economy one needs the complementary gift of speech, the ability to communicate what one knows according to the proper method. This is true as much in any human discipline as in theology, but in the latter, where one handles spiritual realities and divine wisdom, one must speak through the Spirit. It is the Spirit’s gifting to speak, as well as revelation of the divine wisdom, which enables a teacher to fulfill his or her divine vocation according to a method proper to this knowledge.

In the Teaching of the Spirit

In 1 Cor. 2:13, Paul writes, “Those things we speak, we speak not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit (ἐν διδακτοῖς πνεύματος; Vulg. *in doctrina spiritus*), interpreting spiritual realities to spiritual people.” This ‘teaching activity of the Spirit’ (*doctrina spiritus*), as it became in the Latin, was read by many as indicating a method for teachers guided by the Spirit’s own interior teaching. Theologians teach *in doctrina spiritus* by yielding themselves to what they learn from the Spirit and letting themselves be used by him to teach their students. In Primaticci’s words, the Spirit teaches teachers to teach and, at the same time, teaches hearers to hear.

Primaticci, we will see, repeats Aquinas’ viewpoint well, and with slightly more breadth, when he explains this verse. “‘But we speak’”, he comments, “‘in the teaching of the Holy Spirit,’ who teaches teachers and hearers inwardly, the one to teach and the other to hear divine things and to perform his commands outwardly, and thus it is in this

¹⁴ Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.140.

¹⁵ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 11v.

way that we speak and preach spiritual teachings to spiritual human beings”.¹⁶ The Spirit’s pedagogy is the work encompassing and enabling both the teaching of human teachers and the understanding (and subsequent obedience) of human listeners. The Spirit teaches teachers to teach and listeners to listen well. The latter point, that the Spirit teaches listeners, was commonplace,¹⁷ but the former, that the Spirit also teaches teachers, is something Aquinas, four hundred years before Primaticci, learned from Hugh of St. Cher.¹⁸ Taking up both streams, Aquinas explained, “For Paul adds the appropriate method when he says, ‘but in the teaching of the Spirit,’ that is, as the Holy Spirit teaches us who are speaking inwardly and illumines the hearts of our hearers to understand”.¹⁹ The work of the Spirit in our teaching is not limited to enabling the understanding of our listeners; we who teach also need his inner work in order to teach properly.

Interestingly, in the centuries following Aquinas’ synthesis, the listeners pass out of view and the teachers come to the fore—the opposite of the previous tendency. A new emphasis is placed on the role of the Spirit in teaching teachers how to speak, with varying explanations offered as to how this process takes place. Nicholas of Lyra says simply that we speak “as the Holy Spirit instructs us to speak”,²⁰ but Denis the Carthusian attempts an explanation of the Spirit’s teaching the correct method. He argues that we speak “according to the teaching poured into us by the Holy Spirit, speaking with humble and simple speech, and true knowledge”.²¹ What Denis speaks of as an inpouring (or ‘infused’) teaching, Zwingli will characterize as the Spirit’s ‘dictation’ and inward suggestion: “We speak and preach”, he writes, “what things are revealed to us by the Spirit of God dictating... in those words which the Spirit inwardly suggests, and that simply, without disguise, pretense or hypocrisy”.²²

Meyer will say, with less insistence than Denis and Zwingli that the Spirit gives us the very words, that we speak under the Spirit’s (or Christ’s) ‘impulse.’ But his account is also important for the way in which he ties the Spirit’s pedagogy to other elements of the divine economy, namely, Christ as the centre of God’s saving works: “he will testify

¹⁶ Primaticci, *Lit. exp. ep. Pauli*, fol. 85v.

¹⁷ Cf. interlinear Gloss, col. 211-12; quoted in Lombard, *PL*191: 1552.

¹⁸ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, ad litt., fol. 78r.

¹⁹ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.2.109.

²⁰ Nicholas of Lyra, col. 212.

²¹ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 39v.

²² Zwingli, *Ep. aliq. Pauli*, p.454.

concerning me” (Jn. 14:26). Meyer writes, “We spoke those things by the Spirit of God, who testifies to our hearts that they were truly of Christ, under whose impulse we speak them, and believing in whom we shall be saved”.²³ In each of these commentators, then, whether the Spirit’s work is described as infusion, dictation, impulsion, suggestion, or simply instruction, the Spirit’s immediate and contemporary teaching of the human teacher is recognized as necessary for the performance of the teacher’s duty before God, the task of communicating to her listeners the wisdom of God.

One may have also noticed, however, that in emphasizing the ‘teaching activity of the Spirit,’ commentators also drew conclusions about the qualities of teaching that such Spirit-instructed teachers would exhibit. For Denis, Spirit-taught teaching is humble and simple; for Zwingli, it is without deception or show. Catharinus states the same thing more formally in saying that “there was a need for Paul to have words of the kind which the Spirit teaches, in order that there would be a fittingness to the material. For the matter and the word needed to stand in proportion”.²⁴ To teach about spiritual realities, one needs Spirit-taught words, and these words have a certain spiritual character: “As the Spirit is, so are the things he teaches”.²⁵ This will be the main emphasis of the Reformation-era commentary on the *doctrina Spiritus* that derives from Erasmus.

The early Catholic reformer Erasmus is, as usual, the starting point for much Reformed commentary. He restores, in contrast to those just surveyed, Aquinas’ dual treatment of the teacher and the listener. This is his lengthy paraphrase on 2:13:

And this [*doctrina Spiritus*] is the philosophy which we drink as from the Spirit of Christ, and in turn hand on to the devout and simple, not in artfully composed words, as the professors of philosophy pass on what they profess; rather, in uncrafted words we communicate a true spiritual teaching. For it is fitting that since this kind of wisdom is very different, the way of passing it on should also be different. Those things which are human are communicated in a human manner; those things that are heavenly and spiritual are to be handed on by a new method. Nor are they to be given to whomever, but only to those who by drinking of the Spirit of Christ are now able to handle spiritual teaching, and indeed are spiritual themselves. For a spiritual listener always agrees with a spiritual philosophy, having

²³ Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 16r.

²⁴ Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.153.

²⁵ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 865; quoted in Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.189.

their understanding cleansed through faith and their affections corrected through love.²⁶

Rather than identify a particular mode by which the Spirit teaches his teachers (infusion, dictation, impulse, etc.), Erasmus relies on the metaphor of ‘drinking’ our ‘philosophy’ from the Spirit. But the crucial insight Erasmus restores is that both teacher and learner alike must ‘drink of the Spirit’ in order to understand God’s ‘spiritual philosophy,’ the learner being ‘cleansed’ and ‘corrected.’ As we saw with Primaticci, the Spirit’s pedagogy encompasses both the teacher and the learner. In order to achieve his ends, the Spirit inwardly instructs both human parties. Since the spiritual philosophy learned in this way is a divine rather than a human wisdom, it requires its own particular method of teaching. As with Denis and Zwingli, this is drawn out in terms of simplicity and a lack of verbal ornamentation,²⁷ but also by stressing the contrast between human and divine wisdom.

Qualities of the Teaching of the Spirit

As we saw above, it was Protestant commentators in particular who emphasized this theme of simplicity. Bullinger, for instance, writes comprehensively that “God wished to expound his wisdom to the world simply, through simple people, and with a simple and accessible form of speaking and teaching, without any disguise of human philosophy”.²⁸ God intended his wisdom to be shared in an easy, accessible way, unlike those who teach human philosophy with lofty, self-aggrandizing rhetoric. Bugenhagen argues that the truth should be spoken simply, yet “not ineptly and without an art of treatment”, so that “the common people can follow and understand it in their own thinking”.²⁹ Maior writes similarly that “in handing on the teaching of the gospel, a simple, perspicuous and unique type of speech is to be used”.³⁰ Or Calvin, in the same vein, “And this wisdom of God is handed on ‘in the words of the Holy Spirit,’ that is, in a sincere and simple style, worthy of the Spirit’s majesty”.³¹

²⁶ Ibid., col. 865; quoted in Pellikan, p.189, replacing *purgato ... affectu* with “& is simplex & absque simulatione: mysteria enim spiritus eis qui spiritu ducuntur ut intelligant, explicanda sunt”; partially quoted in Hoffmeister, *In utr. ad Cor. Hom.*, p.27.

²⁷ Cf. Pellikan’s modifications in the note above.

²⁸ Bullinger, *Comm.*, fol. 13v.

²⁹ Bugenhagen, *Comm.*, fol. [B7]r.

³⁰ Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 25v.

³¹ Calvin, CO49: 343; quoted partially in Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.36.

Calvin thus provides a reason for why simplicity would characterize the teaching of the Spirit, namely, ‘the Spirit’s majesty.’ Why would intricate rhetoric not be just as or even more fitting for Spirit-taught words in this case? In a moment he provides an answer. “Yet in Paul”, he writes, “there was a type of teaching such that the sole and bare power of the Spirit shone forth, without any external aid”.³² Simplicity, according to Calvin, is a key characteristic of Christian teaching because it is a mode of translucence. In a teacher who shares God’s wisdom simply, as a simple person, and in a simple manner of speaking, the power of the Spirit (*sola nudaque spiritus vis*) can shine through and be clearly visible to her listeners. Human eloquence, on the other hand, is a form of opaqueness; the human teacher becomes the object of their listeners’ attention, rather than the divine author of the wisdom they are sharing. Thus, a moral-spiritual imperative emerges: we ought to be simple in ourselves and in our speech as we teach, as a way of acknowledging that our teaching does not originate with us, but with God, who has granted it its truth and saving power.

Musculus summarizes this string of commentary on 2:13 well when he argues, “The reason why our preaching has no flavour of human wisdom is that we have been wetted ‘not with the spirit of this world but with the Spirit of God,’ whom we have not only as the enlightener and teacher of our hearts, but also as the governor of our mouth and the shaper of our words... [For] we speak not only the things we have learned from the Holy Spirit, but also in the way we have been instructed by him to speak”.³³ Thus Musculus ties together the earlier tradition of the Spirit as the internal teacher of particular words (‘the governor of our mouth and the shaper of our words’) as well as the later tradition of the Spirit’s teaching of a simple form of speech (with ‘no flavour of human wisdom’). The wider synthesis of Aquinas and Erasmus, however, which takes into view both the teacher and the learner under this *doctrina Spiritus*, is not held together by Protestant commentators, or at least not in a single gaze. Only a Catholic such as Primaticci does so, while Protestant commentators, on the other hand, attend at 1 Cor. 2:13 solely to the method of the teachers.

The extended thinking of the Reformers about pedagogical method does, however, bear fruit elsewhere. Examining the opening of Paul’s third chapter, both Calvin

³² Ibid.

³³ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 68-69.

and Vermigli drew connections between the kind of condescension practiced by Paul in his teaching and the need for teachers to meet students at their own level: “And I, brothers, was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as fleshly, as infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able” (3:1-2). Calvin comments on this verse, “It is a mark of the prudent teacher to accommodate himself to the grasp of those he undertakes to teach. So with the unsteady and unlearned he begins from the basics and progresses no higher than they can follow, so that, in short, he pours in the teaching bit by bit, not overflowing as it would if more liberally poured”.³⁴ He continues, “For unless the listener throws up an obstacle by fault of his slowness, the task of a good teacher is always to climb higher until he has arrived at perfection”.³⁴ In theology as in other disciplines, one must learn and teach progressively; one begins with the simplest elements and progresses to a more complex understanding gradually. It is, Vermigli argues, following Paul, like building a house: “The ecclesiastical teacher ought, in the first place, to descend to the grasp of his hearers, and since the Church is very like a building, one ought first to lay a foundation rather than bringing in the walls or roof. For this reason, I don’t see how anything can be accomplished in the Church today, if the catechisms are not carefully practiced”.³⁵ Reform of catechical instruction was considered a necessary pedagogical task by the Protestants, one they saw as relaying the ‘foundation’ of sound teaching in the Church.³⁶ Paul’s metaphor of himself as a “wise architect” who “laid a foundation” (3:10a) gives rise to a number of important reflections on the proper qualities of teaching: “Let each person watch how they build” (3:10b), the apostle warns, that is, how they go about it and with what materials.

Measures for Evaluating Good, Deficient and Bad Teaching

In 1 Cor. 3:10-17, Paul develops the metaphor of the Church or the Christian as a building. Paul has laid the foundation of this building, which is Christ or faith in him or teachings

³⁴ Calvin, CO49: 347-48.

³⁵ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 63r.

³⁶ On Calvin’s catechetical reforms, see esp. Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian: The Shape of his Writing and Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), ch. 6, “Building Up the Faith of Children: Calvin’s Catechisms, 1536-1545”; Jacques Courvoisier, “Les catéchismes de Genève et de Strasbourg. Etude sur le développement de la pensée de Calvin,” *Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 84 (1935): 106-22.

about him,³⁷ and others are building on top of it. The commentary tradition initially produced a number of readings of this passage, in which the materials one uses to build on top of the foundation are variously teachings, thoughts, words or actions.³⁸ As one progresses through the exegetical history, reading Paul as referring to teaching becomes more and more common to the exclusion of the others, to the point that Maior, in the Reformation, calls it a *locus communis* for distinguishing between teachers.³⁹ To summarize and oversimplify, Chrysostom and the Greek tradition take the passage to refer to one's actions and not teaching;⁴⁰ Aquinas and the medieval tradition, following Augustine's scattered leads, understand Paul as referring to thoughts, desires, actions and teachings;⁴¹ and the Reformation traditions, finally, focus almost entirely on teaching as the meaning of Paul's superstructure.⁴² Bullinger, for instance, offers this explanation of Paul's metaphor as if it were self-evident: "Building is teaching; the project which is built is the Church".⁴³ Since I am focused here on the character and quality of teaching, I will largely restrict what follows to those interpretations that see the building materials as better or worse teachings.

Paul distinguishes between two sets of materials that may be used in building on top of his foundation. One could build with precious metals and stones (gold, silver and precious stones), materials which become purer and clearer in the revealing fire (1 Cor. 3:13), or with flammable materials (wood, hay and straw) which cannot survive exposure to it. Many commentators took these contrasting sets of materials as descriptive of good and bad teaching, the precious metals and stones referring to the good and the flammable materials to the bad. Aquinas, however, seems to notice that in both cases the foundation is preserved; thus, we have to do with a distinction not between good and bad teachers, but between better and worse. The truly bad teachers are those who

³⁷ See chapter four, "Faith and Christ: The Foundation of Theological Practice."

³⁸ E.g., Origen, *fr.* 15, p.245. Cf. Jon Balserak's survey of the exegetical history of 1 Cor. 3:10-15: "I Corinthians Commentary: Exegetical Tradition," in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, eds. Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi and Frank A. James III (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp.283-304 at pp.295-302.

³⁹ Maior., *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 37r.

⁴⁰ Chrysostom, *Hom.* 9.4, PG61: 78.

⁴¹ Augustine, *ciu.* 21.26; *ench.* 18; *f. et op.* 15; latter two quoted in Lanfranc of Bec, PL150: 165.

⁴² Bugenhagen, an exception, begrudgingly permits the teaching interpretation (*Comm.*, fol. [M7]v-N3r), but prefers that of works (M3v-M5v).

⁴³ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 32r.

destroy the foundation, those who “destroy” the temple of God (3:17).⁴⁴ It is only with Cajetan though, that this latent schema comes fully into view; he works with a distinction between the good, the deficient and the bad.⁴⁵ Although certainly not all commentators possessed such a clear tripartite division⁴⁶—indeed, it seems Cajetan only arrives at this understanding along the way—it will provide a helpful heuristic device for arranging the qualities the commentators suggest as characterizing good, deficient and bad teachers.

I will also introduce a further distinction between characteristics of teaching as an act and teaching as a material content, or between adverbial qualities of teaching and adjectival qualities. Ambrosiaster’s contrast of teaching badly (*male*) to teaching bad things (*mala*) can serve to illustrate this: the former is a quality of teaching as an act, while the latter is a quality of a teaching or sets of teachings, teaching as a content.⁴⁷ To reiterate, I am imposing two sets of distinctions on the mass of comments that come to us from the exegetical history: one between good, deficient and bad teachers, and another between qualities of teaching as an act and qualities of teaching as a content.

The first and most important quality of good (as well as deficient) teaching, is that it must conform to the foundation: “For no one can lay another foundation than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (3:11). Let each one, then, “watch how they build” (3:10b): “that is”, Nicholas of Lyra explains, “in what way one teaches, in order that their teaching may not differ from the foundation but rather agree with it”.⁴⁸ Denis the Carthusian, similarly, writes in Paul’s voice, “Let any of the preachers teaching you watch how they build, that is, what sort of teachings they are setting before you, lest with their teaching they contradict that which I set down”.⁴⁹ In theology, one does not begin from scratch; there is a ‘foundation,’ a standard to which one must conform, which comprises Christ himself, our faith in him and the teachings about him. Cajetan understood this

⁴⁴ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.2.139. That this is seen already by Aquinas is a point I owe to Marie Hendrickx, *Sagesse de Dieu et sagesse des hommes. Le commentaire de 1 Co 1-4 et sa confrontation avec la grande glose de Pierre Lombard*, ThD dissertation (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1987), p.210.

⁴⁵ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 45r-v.

⁴⁶ Gregory the Great adds a third set, comprising worthless metals, to Paul’s two: these are lead, iron and tin. They will not be burned up by the fire and will perdure “insoluble”, like gold, silver and precious stones, but they are worthless and mark a teacher as bad rather than good or merely deficient. See his *Dial.* 4.41; quoted by Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.53.

⁴⁷ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 36; quoted by Raban Maur, *PL*112: 34.

⁴⁸ Nicholas of Lyra, col. 218.

⁴⁹ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 40v.

clearly: “He is not speaking of just any teaching, but that which is added to this foundation, that is, that which presupposes faith in Jesus Christ”.⁵⁰

This is true not only because of the character of good students in this discipline, as we have already seen, but also because it is written into the subject matter. There can be no other foundation for the Church and its teaching than that which already stands in the economy, Jesus Christ, who is the lord and author of both the Church and its teaching, as well as the salvation for which its people are destined. “Thus”, Calvin claims, “whoever follows after [Paul] cannot in good faith serve the Lord in any other way, nor be heard as ministers of Christ,⁵¹ unless they make an effort to adapt their own to his [the apostle’s] teaching and preserve the foundation which he laid”. Paul’s apostolic teaching bears an insuperable authority for Calvin—not only, but also not least—because he “fully performed his role faithfully” and “left nothing to be desired in his ministry”.⁵² Since Paul’s own execution of his office was entirely faithful to Christ’s commission, whoever receives a gift and call to teaching after him ought to ‘adapt’ their teaching to his—which means, functionally, to Scripture. While ‘faithfulness’ will be an important category in which commentators speak of the qualities of good teachers, not least because Paul uses it in 4:2, there are many others which writers suggest, all expositions of the basic claim that one’s teaching must correspond to the foundation laid by the faithful apostle.

Due to the fragmentary nature of most explications of the character of “gold, silver and precious stones” or “wood, hay or straw” (1 Cor. 3:12), I am reduced to a mere cataloguing of comments. However, even this impressionistic method will bring to view the many qualities commentators saw as indicative of good (as opposed now to deficient) teaching. To begin with adverbial qualities, qualities of teaching as an act, someone who teaches well by building with “gold, silver or precious stones” (3:12), teaches “diligently” and “reasonably”;⁵³ “faithfully”;⁵⁴ “simply”;⁵⁵ “humbly”;⁵⁶ “simply and plainly”;⁵⁷ “purely and sincerely”, “correctly”, “rightly, sincerely and prudently”;⁵⁸ “fruitfully” or “effectively

⁵⁰ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 45r.

⁵¹ Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 867.

⁵² Calvin, *CO49*: 354.

⁵³ Sedulius, *PL103*: 133.

⁵⁴ Atto of Vercelli, *PL134*: 325.

⁵⁵ Ps.-Jerome, *PL30*: 719; cf. interlinear Gloss, col. 209-10.

⁵⁶ Nicholas of Lyra, col. 206.

⁵⁷ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 24r.

⁵⁸ Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 17r, 37v, 47v.

and with fruit";⁵⁹ "simply and purely".⁶⁰ Some of these qualities of teaching, one may have noticed, relate more so to the character of the teacher: a teacher needs to teach 'faithfully,' 'humbly,' 'prudently' and 'sincerely.' Others relate to the character of the method and words employed; in this regard, a teacher ought to teach 'reasonably,' 'plainly,' 'correctly,' 'rightly' and 'simply.' Still others relate to the effect that good teaching ought to have, since teaching should be undertaken 'diligently' and 'fruitfully' or 'effectively and with fruit.' Together, these qualities impress a picture of how commentators viewed the proper execution of teaching theology as an act or set of acts; this teaching demands certain personal qualities in the teacher, as well as a proper method and eye to the desired result.

Conversely, some may be found to teach less well by building with "wood, hay or straw" (3:12). Qualities identified as deficient (or bad) teaching, an act of teaching which is less faithful to its standard, include teaching "negligently";⁶¹ "ambitiously or proudly", "with a desire for honour", "in idleness", and "coldly" or "lightly".⁶² Although fewer commentators give suggestions here, it is interesting to note that they are more concerned with the personal qualities of the teacher and the effect of teaching rather than its method. Vermigli especially is concerned that the teacher not teach 'ambitiously,' 'proudly,' 'idly' or seeking honour. Each of these vices poisons the work of theology because each is an improper response or orientation to one's place in the economy of divine pedagogy. Ambition and pride fail to recognize God's authorship and giving of grace, idleness arises from a failure to understand the weight and significance of one's task, and looking for honour from one's fellow teachers or students falsely replaces the honour one should seek from God alone. If one does, however, possess the qualities that mark teaching well, it is more likely that one's teachings, the content of what one has to say, will also be faithful. The performance of the work and the content of that work are interrelated.

The exegetical history is more profuse when it comes to adjectival qualities of good teaching, characteristics of teaching as a content. A teaching is good, it is made of

⁵⁹ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 63r, 113v.

⁶⁰ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 33.

⁶¹ Cassiodorus, *PL*68: 514; quoted by ps.-Jerome, *PL*30: 726.

⁶² Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 16v, 75r, 113v.

“gold, silver of precious stones” (1 Cor. 3:12), when it is “very clear”;⁶³ “holy”;⁶⁴ “good, sound and catholic” or “true”;⁶⁵ “sincere”;⁶⁶ for Aquinas, “solid truth and clear or apparent, and bearing on the adornment of the Church”;⁶⁷ “easy”⁶⁸ or “simple”⁶⁹ and so more “apt” than “lofty”—even though “teachers ought to be ‘weaned from the milk’ (Is. 28:9)”, they should nevertheless “not despise ‘simple teaching’”.⁷⁰ Such teaching, moving now into the Reformation, should be “holy and uncontaminated”;⁷¹ “excellent and solid” or “effective”;⁷² the “simple and humble teaching of Christ”⁷³ or “simple and sound teaching of the gospel”;⁷⁴ the “knowledge of things useful and expedient for the progress of the spiritual life”;⁷⁵ they should be “pious teachings”,⁷⁶ “true and solid piety”⁷⁷ and possess a “chaste and simple manner of speech”.⁷⁸

Particularly for Protestant commentators, these teachings must be drawn from and correspond with Scripture: good theology is a “true and perspicuous exposition enlightening the prophetic and apostolic writings”;⁷⁹ it comprises “sound and most certain teachings, drawn from the inner parts of the holy scriptures, that is, consistent with the prophetic and apostolic characters”;⁸⁰ it is even, for Vermigli, the “sole voice of Christ, that is, the true and genuine meaning of Scripture”.⁸¹ Calvin gives a number of characterizations of good teaching: it is “sound”, “living and effective”, the “bare Christ and simple gospel”; it is “solid and effective and has more of sincerity than elegance”; it

⁶³ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 36.

⁶⁴ Haymo, *PL*117: 525.

⁶⁵ Atto of Vercelli, *PL*134: 319, 332.

⁶⁶ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, exp. gloss., fol. 80r.

⁶⁷ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.2.160.

⁶⁸ Interlinear Gloss, col. 215-16.

⁶⁹ Nicolas of Gorran, *Postil.*, fol. 59r.

⁷⁰ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, exp. gloss., fol. 78v, quoting Gilbert of Hoyland, “Sermones in Canticum Salomonis,” 27.2, in *Sancti Bernardi abbatis clarae-vallensis opera omnia*, vol. 2, ed. D. Joannis Mabillon, 4th ed. (Paris: Gaume Fratres, 1839), col. 187.

⁷¹ Lefevre d’Etaples, *S. Pauli Ep.*, fol. 109v.

⁷² Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 867, 868.

⁷³ Zwingli, *Ep. aliq. Pauli*, p.453.

⁷⁴ Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 8v.

⁷⁵ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 45r; cf. n. 92 below.

⁷⁶ Hoffmeister, *In utr. ad Cor. Hom.*, p.40.

⁷⁷ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 91.

⁷⁸ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 22v.

⁷⁹ Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 37r.

⁸⁰ Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 20v-21r.

⁸¹ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, *praefatio*, fol. 3r.

is, finally, “a teaching worthy of Christ, and that building which is congruous with such a foundation”.⁸²

These many qualities, drawn together from numerous commentators, show a concern for at least three areas: the source to which good teaching ought to correspond, the quality of the teaching itself, and the effect or result such teaching ought to have. Theology ought to be drawn from the ‘teaching of Christ,’ the ‘teaching of the gospel’ or the ‘prophetic and apostolic writings’ of Scripture. Such a teaching or set of teachings will be ‘perspicuous,’ ‘clear,’ ‘apparent,’ ‘simple,’ ‘easy,’ ‘humble,’ ‘apt,’ ‘sound,’ ‘uncontaminated,’ ‘holy,’ ‘pious,’ ‘good,’ ‘solid,’ ‘most certain’ and ‘true.’ Finally, this teaching will be ‘useful and expedient’ or ‘effective’; it will be ‘catholic,’ both drawn from and contributing to unity; and it will have a ‘bearing on the adornment of the Church’ and aid in the ‘progress of the spiritual life.’ A healthy theology, in other words, will be “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). Theology is not solely concerned with the knowledge of God—even if it is primarily so⁸³—but also with how this knowledge, this divine wisdom, builds up the Church in its various members toward the salvation for which they are destined in Christ.

On the other hand, a teaching is deficient—or bad, since many commentators make no distinction between the two—if it is “deformed”;⁸⁴ “corrupt and vain” or “bad and adulterated”;⁸⁵ “false”;⁸⁶ “frivolous” and “without any reference to faith”;⁸⁷ according to Aquinas, “useless, and not apparent, nor proven by reason of the truth, but vain and empty”;⁸⁸ “a falsehood spoken unknowingly”, “superfluity” or mere “curiosity”.⁸⁹ They can be “impious teachings and the poisons of seduction” or “the venom of disease-ridden teachings”;⁹⁰ “fleshly and earthly”, “frivolous and vile” or “adulterated”;⁹¹ they may be “curious and less useful and similarly vain things occupying Christian minds, and so

⁸² Calvin, *argumentum*, CO49: 297, 299, 321, 322, 355.

⁸³ So Aquinas, *ST* 1a.1.4.

⁸⁴ Ephrem the Syrian, *Comm.*, p.53.

⁸⁵ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 36, 37; cf. Atto of Vercelli, *PL*134: 319.

⁸⁶ Atto of Vercelli, *PL*134: 332.

⁸⁷ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, exp. gloss., fol. 80r.

⁸⁸ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.2.160.

⁸⁹ Nicolas of Gorran, *Postil.*, fol. 63r.

⁹⁰ Lefevre d’Etaples, *S. Pauli Ep.*, fol. 109v.

⁹¹ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 867, 868.

creating a hindrance to the progress of the spiritual life";⁹² they may comprise "little human constitutions regarding worship, diet and lifeless ceremonies, and other similar things as people tend to fabricate".⁹³ These teachings include "human traditions and such opinions",⁹⁴ the "commands and inventions of human beings" or "hollow and curious questions",⁹⁵ or, for Calvin, "the figments of human beings, such as also contribute nothing to the building, as for example, curious questions";⁹⁶ they are "empty and frivolous, bearing no relation to the foundation of the building".⁹⁷ Finally, they may "seem to possess a certain appearance of truth, but more properly looked into and rightly examined by the most certain rule of the Scriptures, they must be uprooted after the truth has been discovered".⁹⁸

These qualities can also be divided into the three categories laid out for characteristics of good teachings: the source or origin of these deficient teachings, the poor qualities of the teachings themselves, and the resultant effect these teachings then have on their hearers. In terms of their source, they are not divine but 'fleshly and earthly,' merely human 'traditions,' 'inventions,' 'figments,' 'superfluities' or 'curiosities.' They are characterized by being 'deformed,' 'corrupt,' 'adulterated,' 'bad,' 'vile,' 'impious,' 'empty,' 'hollow,' neither 'apparent' nor 'proven' and 'false.' Finally, with regard to their effect, they do not serve the building of the Church, but are 'vain,' 'frivolous,' and 'useless,' 'bearing no relation to the foundation' and 'contributing nothing to the building.' Worse than this, they may even be harmful: 'the poisons of seduction' or 'the venom of disease-ridden teachings.' They will not, then, endure the fire of judgment, because they have nothing of lasting value to contribute to the building. The teacher who teaches them is guilty of teaching deficiently (or badly, if they corrode the foundation), and that is why he or she "will suffer their loss" as one passing "through fire" (1 Cor. 3:15). But in the case of deficient teaching, the foundation is still preserved; nothing directly corrosive of faith in Christ is presented by such a teacher. This is the important qualification in Nicolas of Gorran's suggestion that the flammable wood is 'a falsehood

⁹² Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 45r; cf. n. 75 above.

⁹³ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 868; quoted in Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.194.

⁹⁴ Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 37v.

⁹⁵ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 74v.

⁹⁶ Calvin, *CO49*: 355.

⁹⁷ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 92.

⁹⁸ Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 21r.

spoken unknowingly.’ There is no sin—or, at least, there is only venial sin⁹⁹—in teaching something false while believing it to be true. To teach something that one knows to be destructive of faith, however, would be to act in a way that intentionally erodes the foundation of the Church.

This important qualification explains why teachers who have some faults and flawed teaching may still be used with benefit by students of God’s wisdom. Hervé of Bourg-Dieu explains that the metaphor of the person who builds with wood, hay or straw “ought not be understood as a heretical teacher, but as a Catholic who does not teach rightly. For in the books of the holy teachers read authoritatively in the Church, there are found some things which are deformed or heretical, and yet neither these books nor these authors are condemned on this account”.¹⁰⁰ Cajetan agrees that this passage “does not speak of ministers teaching heresies, or things corruptive of the life and morals of Christians”.¹⁰¹ They may be deficient in teaching the odd heretical teaching, but they are not teaching heresy in any fundamental sense; the central truth about Christ and his crucifixion still holds.¹⁰² Thus their teachings and writings may still be useful to us, but we will have to be more circumspect in our spiritual discernment while making use of them. Those who teach them will certainly still be saved, but “as through fire” (1 Cor. 3:15).

It is interesting in this connection to note the theological judgment the Reformers made about many of their patristic and medieval predecessors. Even though they were viewed as tainted by their connection with the Roman Catholic Church, these older saints, according to Calvin, had maintained the “foundational teaching” of worship of the one God and trust in salvation through Christ.¹⁰³ In other words, the foundation was preserved; only the flammable superstructure was lost. These deficient teachers, in Maior’s judgment, raised faulty buildings “through ignorance”, and so, since they “retained Christ as the foundation and upheld faith in this mediator against sin and death, they were saved, but in such a way ‘as if through fire,’ that is, as repenting,

⁹⁹ Cf. n. 46 above, where Gregory the Great explains wood, hay or straw as venial sins and his own triplet of lead, iron or tin as mortal sins.

¹⁰⁰ Hervé, *PL*181: 842.

¹⁰¹ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 45r.

¹⁰² For a parallel with the doctrine of incarnation instead of crucifixion, see Robert Dodaro, OSA, “‘Omnes haeretici negant Christum in carne uenisse’ (Aug., *serm.* 183.9.13): Augustine on the Incarnation as Criterion for Orthodoxy,” *Augustinian Studies* 38/1 (2007): 163-74.

¹⁰³ Calvin, *CO*49: 307.

acknowledging the ‘straw’ and their errors, and remaining only on the foundation. It is thus that many of the Holy Fathers were preserved”.¹⁰⁴ Calvin, similarly, argues that “Paul says that such can be saved, but on this condition, that the Lord wipes away their ignorance and purges them from all filth”.¹⁰⁵ If and how such a ‘wiping away’ and ‘purging’ is possible through a revealing fire of judgment, I will come to in a moment, but beforehand let us turn to our final category.

In addition to the good teachers, signified by gold, silver and precious stones, and the deficient, signified by wood, hay and straw (3:12), Paul also mentions those who not merely construct better or worse superstructures, but also those who destroy the whole building: “If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy that person” (3:17). These are the third and final kind of teachers in Cajetan’s division: neither the good, nor the deficient, but the bad. Commentary on this verse is remarkably consistent through the history of exegesis. Almost all see that the temple can be destroyed in one of two ways in line with the way Paul’s metaphor was read in 3:12, either by teaching or by action. Cassiodorus argues one destroys the temple of God in destroying “either one’s own body by sinning, or the people of the Church by seducing them into deformed teaching or certainly destroying it by one’s own example”.¹⁰⁶ These would be the main lines of interpretation into the Reformation period: the temple of God can refer either to oneself or to the whole Church; if oneself, then it can only be destroyed through sin, but if the Church, then it can be destroyed either through one’s sinful example or through one’s destructive teaching.

Bruno the Carthusian writes in the twelfth-century, “But if someone violates the temple of God by destroying the foundation of faith, either in oneself through criminal acts or in one’s hearers by teaching falsehoods, God will certainly destroy him with an eternal ruin”.¹⁰⁷ Similarly Aquinas writes, in his usual clear fashion, “The temple of God is violated in two ways. In one way through false teaching that does not build on the foundation but rather undermines the foundation and destroys the building.... In another way one violates the temple of God by mortal sin, by which one either corrupts oneself or

¹⁰⁴ Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 38r-v.

¹⁰⁵ Calvin, *CO49*: 357.

¹⁰⁶ Cassiodorus, *PL68*: 514.

¹⁰⁷ Bruno the Carthusian, *PL153*: 140.

another, by action or by example”.¹⁰⁸ Again one sees Cassiodorus’ interpretation enduring. Cajetan, as usual, follows Aquinas. “But twisted ministers”, he writes, “corrupt the temple of God by things contrary to Christian morals, faith or life in teaching and example”.¹⁰⁹ To so “corrupt the faithful” in this way “through false teaching merits damnation”, argues Nicholas of Lyra.¹¹⁰

By intentionally teaching false things that are corrosive of faith in Christ, one is directly opposing the pedagogical work of God, a work by which God intends to lead humanity to a saving knowledge of himself. A bad teacher is leading his students into damnation; he is not acting as a coworker in God’s economy, but rather as an opponent. Maior, finally, depicts the insidiousness and true intention of such counter-pedagogy. “The temple of the Holy Spirit”, he explains, “is polluted in two ways: first, by impious teaching, and second, by impious actions, sayings and evil desires. But Paul speaks in this verse principally of the pollution of teaching..., when impious teachers wish to set a profane and impious teaching in their hearts, like an idol in the temple where only the Spirit of God with the pure word ought to be seated and reside.... You would more easily purge a temple, that is, a heart, polluted with prostitution, drunkenness, avarice or any other sin, than one polluted with perverse teaching”. Once established in the heart, bad teaching is very difficult to uproot and clings pertinaciously to it.¹¹¹ Both because of the difficulty of undoing this bad pedagogy and the harm that results from it, God delivers its proponents the harshest judgment. “If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy that person” (3:17).

Teaching with such high stakes is a heavy task. “Not many of you”, James says, “should become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive greater judgment” (3:1). This is no occasion for us to become proud, knowing ourselves invested with a commission of eternal significance in the economy; rather, it is an occasion for humility. Nicholas of Lyra admonishes us, quoting Gregory the Great, that “‘a person ought to be that much humbler in their duty,’ and that much readier to serve God, ‘the more one recognizes oneself to be obligated to render an account’”.¹¹² Denis the Carthusian writes

¹⁰⁸ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.3.174.

¹⁰⁹ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 45v.

¹¹⁰ Nicholas of Lyra, col. 221.

¹¹¹ Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 39v.

¹¹² Gregory the Great, *HEv.* 1.9.1; quoted in Nicholas of Lyra, col. 227.

in agreement, “For the greater the gifts a person receives from God, the more they are obligated to obey God in all things out of sincere love”.¹¹³ The theologian ought to live constantly in the light of their position within the economy of God’s pedagogy, not only aware that their calling, gifting and authority is a gift of God, but also that one’s response to and use of them is answerable to the One who comes to judge the living and the dead.

The vocation to teaching God’s wisdom brings with it not only divine and saving gifts, but also hefty obligation: “And I was with you in weakness and fear and much trembling” (1 Cor. 2:3). For this reason, Pellikan writes that “they do not correctly strain for the goal who preach the gospel absent fear and dangers, without power and an example of holiness, who procrastinate and are lifeless and do everything neglectfully, and only treat the matter with an outflux of words”.¹¹⁴ One must not only speak the gospel, as if it were mere words, but also live the truth of the gospel; one must possess “a life which corresponds to the teaching”.¹¹⁵ But this is not something that rests in one’s own power: here as always, it comes as God’s gift. “This modesty” of Paul, Calvin writes, “suits the servants of the Lord, that conscious of their own feebleness, receiving at one and the same time difficulty from adversity and the excellence of such an office, they revere God and obey him with fear. For those who”, he continues, “carry themselves confidently and with a proud spirit, or who perform the ministry of the word securely, as if equal to the task, know neither themselves nor the matter at hand”.¹¹⁶ Rather, one ought to set one’s hand to the plough with fear and trembling, knowing that for “every idle word that people speak, they will render an account of it in the day of judgment” (Mt. 12:36). And we speak not an idle word, but a word able to sow imperishable life in human hearts. We are instruments of salvation in God’s hands.

The Testing Fire of God’s Judgment

Since, then, it is to God that we are responsible, we ought to fulfill the commission entrusted to us faithfully, as “stewards (οἰκονόμους) of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). The paterfamilias of this heavenly household, this οἰκός, is God, and he will undertake an accounting that brings to light the true character of our stewardship, as good, deficient or

¹¹³ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 42r.

¹¹⁴ Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.187.

¹¹⁵ Theodoret of Cyrrhus, PG82: 252.

¹¹⁶ Calvin, CO49: 334.

bad. Those who deny this “disregard the coming of the Lord, for in this way they teach what they want, not what the Lord commands, as if they will not have to render an account to the judge of all”, “as if”, Bugenhagen goes on, he were “some imaginary and idle God”.¹¹⁷ Yet as Paul teaches: “Each person’s work will become apparent, for the day will make it clear, because it will be revealed in the fire, and the fire will test each person’s work, of what quality it is” (3:13). Just what this fire consists in, however, and whether it is temporal or eternal, punitive or purgative, received little consensus in the history of exegesis.¹¹⁸

For the Greek tradition following Chrysostom, the fire represented an eschatological, eternal penalty. While Paul says that the deficient (or bad) teacher “will be saved, but so as through fire” (3:15), Chrysostom argues that it is idiomatic for Greeks to say (ἡμῖν ἔθος λέγειν) a thing is “saved in the fire” when it is “not immediately consumed and reduced to ash”. Thus, a person ‘saved’ in the fire is not brought to nothingness (εἰς ἀνυπαρξίαν), as their flammable works are, but is preserved there in the flame, continually burning.¹¹⁹ John of Damascus, quoting Chrysostom, adds in clarification, “as if to say, but they remain, being punished unendingly”.¹²⁰ It is evident, then, that Chrysostom and the Greeks are working not with a tripartite division of 1 Cor. 3:10-17, but only with a twofold division, between the good, who build with precious metals, and the bad, who build with flammable materials, and lose their works in the fire, but are kept themselves in eternal punishment.

Theodoret of Cyrrhus, a half-century later than Chrysostom, offers a different reading. Since the precious metals and flammable materials refer to actions rather than teaching, on the Greek view,¹²¹ he offers no consideration of the quality of a teacher’s teaching but only of their life. Teachers will be judged by their actions and their students will be punished for their own actions resulting from how they receive the teaching, either well or wickedly. “For the teacher”, he argues, “is not the cause of their turn for the worse”.¹²² Instead, each bears the responsibility for their own life and cannot blame a

¹¹⁷ Bugenhagen, *Comm.* fol. Pr.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Schrage, *Die erste Brief an der Korinther*, pp.307-8.

¹¹⁹ Chrysostom, *Hom.* 9.5-6, PG61: 79; quoted with modifications by John of Damascus, PG95: 596. Cf. Theophylact of Ohrid, PG124: 604.

¹²⁰ John of Damascus, PG95: 596.

¹²¹ Cf. n. 40 above. Also, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, PG82: 252.

¹²² Theodoret of Cyrrhus, PG82: 249-52.

bad teacher for their own sinfulness. “The serpent deceived me”, Eve pleaded, “and I ate” (Gen. 3:12 ESV); yet she could not excuse her own action. While Theodoret’s reading has some appeal, then, it is nevertheless the serpent who received the harshest curse. The majority reading of Chrysostom, however, also seems forced: how can the fire be an eternal punishment when one passes through (διὰ) it, rather than stays in (ἐν) it, as Chrysostom reads? A more likely interpretation of Paul’s passage would understand the fire as a temporal, or at least temporary, judgment. In this case there are still a number of options, as the Latin commentators show.

In the middle ages, there were three common interpretations of the “day” which reveals the character of a teacher’s work by fire (1 Cor. 3:13). At the origin of the Latin tradition, Ambrosiaster begins the line of exegesis which reads this ‘day’ straightforwardly as the day of final judgment. He writes, “For since nothing unclean will have been found in him of deformed teaching, as in good gold, so he will be as the three brothers in the furnace of fire and will receive eternal life with glory as a reward, because just as gold and silver and stones are not corrupted by fire, so too the good teacher will endure incorruptible”.¹²³ Rather than seeing one’s works pass through the fire, as in the Greek tradition, Ambrosiaster read Paul’s meaning as indicating that the teacher herself will pass under the revealing fire of judgment, and she will become eternally brighter and more glorious if there is nothing unclean in her teaching.

Aquinas took up this interpretation and arranged it alongside two other prominent readings. The day of the Lord can be understood, he argues characteristically, “in three ways, in accordance with the threefold judgment of God”. There is, first, the final day of judgment, the general judgment of all, in which people’s merits will be brought into the open before the face of the Judge; second, the particular judgment at each person’s death when one’s merits are made clear through the fires of purgatory; and third, the judgment of this life in which God sometimes tests people through difficulties in order for them to come out as gold.¹²⁴ These three remained constants in the exegetical history through the Reformation, with the exception, of course, of purgatory. On the Catholic side, Cajetan could say that “according to the plain and smooth meaning of the

¹²³ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 37; quoted in Raban Maur, *PL*112: 37; Lombard, *PL*191: 1561.

¹²⁴ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.2.162-64.

letter, it indicates a purgatorial punishment after this life”.¹²⁵ Protestants, on the other, expended much ink and energy against this theology of purgatory,¹²⁶ while continuing the other two interpretations and favouring the temporal reading of the ‘day’ as tribulations.¹²⁷ With the exegetical renewal of the Reformation, however, new readings of the ‘day’ and the ‘fire’ also arose.

Erasmus, as usual, was the originator of one reading dominant in the Reformation, and Calvin in this case the originator—or perhaps restorer—of another. In line with the Reformers’ claim that theology ought to be tested by the rule of Scripture, Erasmus wrote, paraphrasing 1 Cor. 3:13, “But the work of each one will have its quality openly proved, when it has been brought before the light of truth and the gospel rule”.¹²⁸ Later Reformers would be even more explicit. Meyer, for instance, writes, “‘For the day will declare it,’ that is, a more exact judgment of the Scriptures.... The ‘day,’ therefore, stands for a firm and well-investigated knowledge of the truth, which is not otherwise possessed than by a diligent and well-sought out comparison of the Scriptures. For Scripture”, he continues, “is certainly a light, and just as, then, the day brings to light uncertain and hidden things, in the same way Scripture, diligently examined, brings error into the open”.¹²⁹ But the examination of Scripture is, naturally, a temporal activity, undertaken by human beings within the course of this age, before the final judgment.

In the same way as tribulation is a temporal judgment, taking place in the course of time, it allows, then, for change. A teacher who is exposed to the judgment of tribulation or Scripture or, as we shall see, the Spirit, is granted a space for repentance. Meyer notices this and adds, “This is how the one who built combustible materials on top learns by his condemnation to build a more solid structure after this. Thus, the one who taught frivolities, accused and convicted in the light of Scripture and changed inwardly ‘as if through fire,’ is lead to think more correctly. Nor does this former error hinder his salvation, since it is the bad teachings that perish and not the teacher himself”.¹³⁰ This judgment, in other words, is not so much punitive as purgative. Through the correction of

¹²⁵ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 45r.

¹²⁶ Bugenhagen, *Comm.*, fol. [18]v-L2r; Calvin, *CO49*: 357; Vermigli, locus ‘*de purgatorio*,’ *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 77v-85r; Musculus, locus ‘*Contra opinionem ignis purgatorij*,’ *Comm.*, col. 93-95.

¹²⁷ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 92.

¹²⁸ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 868.

¹²⁹ Bugenhagen, *Comm.*, fol. M2v; Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 21r-v.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. 22r.

Scripture, a bad or deficient teacher is enabled to become better, teaching more properly and truly, or to say the same thing, more faithfully.

Calvin's reading of this passage, in which he understands the 'day' of judgment as the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, knowingly or unknowingly repeats an interpretation that Gregory the Great brings forward. Gregory writes, "The Holy Spirit likewise appeared in a form of fire descending on the apostles (Acts 2), appearing as a sign to the unbelievers and testing the faithful inwardly like a fire".¹³¹ The Spirit acts as a revealing fire in this passage, moving in the hearts of believers and correcting the words and thoughts of his teachers. Calvin, almost a thousand years later, writes that "the fire in this verse is the Spirit of the Lord, who under his inspection tests which teaching is the resemblance of gold and which of straw".¹³² He even reviews the interpretation which sees this fire as temporal difficulties and dismisses it.¹³³ Hemmingsen, who usually follows Calvin's interpretations, says that the quality of what is built with precious metals or flammable materials "is made visible by the bright day, that is, the revealed gospel and exhibited fire, which is the inspection of the Holy Spirit".¹³⁴ This inward inspection of the Holy Spirit, naming what is his and correcting what originates not from his teaching but from elsewhere, is a temporal event, one that allows for a continuing process of change, repentance and improvement in his teachers. Rather than indicating a final disastrous judgment, the revealing fire of the 'day,' on this account, is a repeated probing and refinement of one's teaching to make it ever more faithful to the standard God has laid down.

The Faithfulness Required of Teachers

In whatever way this 'fire' has been read by commentators, whether eternal punishment, the final judgment, purgatory, tribulation, the rule of Scripture or the inspection of the Spirit, in each case God is the active agent, the judge examining and testing the teaching of those he has commissioned as our one Teacher to build his Church. The encompassing standard to which God holds his teachers, in all the many varied indications (and counter-indications) commentators have identified, is faithfulness: "one searches among the

¹³¹ Gregory the Great, *Conc.* 12 responsio, PL79: 666; quoted in Raban Maur, with modification, PL112: 37.

¹³² Calvin, CO49: 356.

¹³³ Ibid., col. 357.

¹³⁴ Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.52.

stewards (οἰκονόμους) to find one who is faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). When God undertakes to judge his teachers, he is looking for one who is faithful to the calling, gifts and task he has entrusted to him. “I was entrusted with a stewardship (οἰκονομίαν),” Paul informs us (9:17). As οἰκονόμους of God’s οἰκονομία of saving knowledge, his teachers must give an accounting of their stewardship. God is looking for a faithful steward. But as Musculus laments, “A minister faithful to Christ is a rare sign upon the earth and like as to a black swan, especially in this our age”.¹³⁵ Each generation perhaps has more or less cause to lament its theologians, their greater or lesser unfaithfulness, but the situation of each before God and the standard to which God calls each remains the same, ever since Christ’s calling and sending of the apostles (Mt. 28:19-20).

Calvin outlines this situation with great acuity while commenting on what it means for Paul to have been “called” as an apostle (1 Cor. 1:1).

Two things are required in order for one to receive a hearing in the Church and possess a teaching position. For one ought to be called by God to this office and to operate in good faith in fulfilling it.... For as no one can by right claim the title and dignity of this office unless called, so too it is not enough for someone to be called unless they also satisfy the office’s conditions. For the Lord does not choose ministers who are unspeaking idols, or who on the pretext of their calling enact tyranny, or who have their own will as a law; instead, he gives orders with regard to how they all, at the same time, ought to be; he binds them to his laws; and finally, he chooses them for the ministry. That is, first of all, that they not be idle, and second, that they confine themselves within the bounds of their office.¹³⁶

There are definite conditions set on one who is called to fulfill the role of a teacher in the Church. God has ‘orders’ and ‘laws’ for teachers, as for each of the other ministries. One cannot follow their own arbitrary will, or worse, abuse the office as a means of tyrannical rule. But Calvin also, interestingly, argues that God’s teachers are not ‘unspeaking idols.’ They have, in other words, a mouth with which to speak words for good or ill. They also have a will, as much in need of correction as it may be, by which they can choose to obey or disobey God’s laws for this office, to act ‘in good faith’ or to defect. Cajetan more briefly, but to the same effect, writes that “one who is faithful” (4:2) “dispenses the office without deception. For ‘one who is faithful’ does not deceive, but fulfills commands just

¹³⁵ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 107-8.

¹³⁶ Calvin, *CO49*: 305. Cf. n. 148 below.

as they are commanded”.¹³⁷ Faithfulness, again, is adherence to an external standard, a standard set by another. Faithfulness on the part of God’s teachers means adherence to the conditions laid on them by God in his economy and the desire to give a good account before his judgment.

Haymo of Auxerre, writing in the ninth century, gives the most influential definition of ‘faithfulness’ on the part of God’s teachers: “But Paul was a faithful steward”, in contrast to the false apostles, “because he spoke as from God, before God. So that person is a faithful steward of the gospel who does not preach anything other than what is contained in the gospel, specifically without error or deceit, and who does not seek his or her own glory in order that they may be praised by their listeners, but rather that God might be glorified through them”.¹³⁸ While there are false apostles who have gone out among the Church, and corrupt the wisdom of divine teaching through measuring it by human wisdom, nevertheless God still has his faithful ministers. As Haymo continues, in a much-quoted phrase, “There are many stewards through whose ministry one comes to eternal salvation”.¹³⁹ In the first passage Haymo identifies two qualities which mark a faithful steward: first, they preach only what they receive from God through the gospel, and not anything of their own; and second, they seek God’s glory rather than their own. Since the second has already been touched on in relation to the ‘status’ of God’s teachers,¹⁴⁰ I will focus on the first, the teacher’s faithfulness in maintaining the ‘foundation,’ the gospel given by God, by speaking *ex Deo coram Deo*.

The faithful steward that Haymo sees in Paul is also the “wise architect” who lays a solid foundation for “God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:9-10). Rather than speaking here of Paul’s faithfulness in preaching the gospel of God, he speaks of, what amounts to the same thing, Paul’s imitation of Christ’s teaching. “The leader in the construction of the house”, Haymo explains, “is called an architect. A wise architect imitates the authorship and will of the one by whom he was instructed, just as Paul did in imitating the teaching of Christ, not preaching anything other than what he perceived from him and saw in his mind”.¹⁴¹ In a phrase verbally parallel to that he uses later, Haymo describes the wise architect as the

¹³⁷ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 45v-46r.

¹³⁸ Haymo, *PL117*: 529; cf. n.143 below.

¹³⁹ Haymo, *PL117*: 529-30; quoted in Gloss, col. 224; Lombard, *PL191*: 1565; Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, exp. gloss., fol. 81v.

¹⁴⁰ See chapter five, “The Delegated Authority of Teachers.”

¹⁴¹ Haymo, *PL117*: 524; cf. n. 134 above. Cf. Lombard, *PL191*: 1560.

one who only preaches what she perceives from Christ and sees in her mind; the faithful steward, similarly, only preaches what is contained in the gospel. In other words, a theologian is faithful when he learns a spiritual understanding of the Scriptures by God's inner teaching—what he perceives from Christ and sees in his mind—and is faithful to that teaching in sharing that, and not his own contrivings, with his students. Of course, distinguishing between God's instruction and our own thoughts is a process of discernment, one that requires a certain spiritual astuteness and attentiveness. But God has also provided gifts within his economy to aid this discernment: the Church, other teachers within it whom we are to 'use' (1 Cor. 3:21),¹⁴² and foremost, the Scriptures.

Commentators in the few centuries following Haymo began to highlight what he passes over quickly, namely, the direction an architect gives to the labourers in the construction of a building. Nicholas of Amiens, for instance, writes that "someone is also properly called an architect who arranges, by their knowledge, how they want a product or building, by means of helpers, made, and in what sequence, and gives orders to them for it to happen".¹⁴³ Aquinas takes up Nicholas' reading, but connects it in a different way with the work of the theologian. Aquinas explains that "the chief builder is called an architect and especially of a building, to which it pertains to know the highest arrangement of the whole work, which is executed by the activity of the manual labourers. And they are therefore said to be wise in building, because one who is wise overall knows the highest cause, who is God, and arranges other things in accordance with God".¹⁴⁴ He says much the same thing in the *Summa theologiae*, citing this same 1 Cor. 3:10.¹⁴⁵ A faithful theologian sees that the proper end of human life is the unending happiness to be found in God alone, the highest cause, and teaches what will lead humanity to that destiny. While Aquinas does not say so here, to do this the teacher of theology needs God's inner teaching in order to come to a spiritual understanding of the Scriptures, whereby she comes to know the divine wisdom that can guide her students to salvation.

In the Reformation, this emphasis on teaching what is learned from Christ through the enlightening of Scripture continues. Calvin writes simply that "loyalty then is to be

¹⁴² See chapter five, "The Proper 'Use' of Teachers."

¹⁴³ Nicholas of Amiens, *Comm. Porr.*, p.47.

¹⁴⁴ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.2.148.

¹⁴⁵ Aquinas, *ST* 1a.1.6.

estimated from whether or not one announces the pure teaching of Christ”;¹⁴⁶ Cajetan, that “Paul wants [the Corinthians] to hold onto the teaching of Holy Scripture, just as he and the other apostles taught”.¹⁴⁷ The teacher (and the student) of God’s wisdom is to hold to the apostolic, biblical teaching as a standard against which his or her faithfulness can be tested. Displacing Christ’s teaching through the scriptural text by introducing a human philosophy in its place would be poor stewardship, and in fact, an act of defection against one’s master. Erasmus, paraphrasing 1 Cor. 4:2 in Paul’s voice, writes, “Those who teach human things in the place of divine, who abuse your obedience for profit and pride, who on the pretext of the gospel do their own thing, who under the shadow of the glory of Christ attempt tyranny, are bad stewards of the faith, and although they impose on human judgment, they do not deceive God, by whom one most of all is tried”.¹⁴⁸ While Erasmus mentions negligence, greed and tyranny here, the first thing he highlights as indicative of bad stewardship is teaching human ideas rather than divine ones. Failing to share God’s teachings with his people is a defection from the very purpose for which one has been commissioned, and “God is not mocked” (Gal. 6:7 ESV).

This defection happened, according to many of the Reformers, in the scholastic preoccupation with philosophy. Rather than attending to the Scriptures, as befits a theologian, many of the students and their teachers in the schools, they would argue, abandoned the word of God for the writings of Aristotle. Musculus argues in this vein that “our teachers are more exhaling Aristotle than the Spirit of God”.¹⁴⁹ Instead of being guided inwardly by the Spirit’s instruction, they let the human words of the philosopher inspire their teaching. Bullinger, likewise, read into the situation at Corinth that the “false apostles more truly taught philosophy than theology”.¹⁵⁰ They had replaced the proper teachings that they should be giving their students, that is, the wisdom of God provided in Scripture and illuminated by the Spirit of God, with teachings foreign both to the author of their mission, because human, and to his intention, because they do not bring

¹⁴⁶ Calvin, *CO49*: 306.

¹⁴⁷ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 46r.

¹⁴⁸ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 869; quoted in Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.197; cf. Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 36v; Calvin in n. 136 above.

¹⁴⁹ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 69.

¹⁵⁰ Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 27v. Cf. Francis Turretini, *Institutio theologiae elencticae* (Edinburgh, 1847 [1679–1685]), vol. 1, p.40; cited in Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), p.142.

knowledge of salvation. In so doing, these bad (or ‘false’) teachers were not building on the one ‘foundation’ of Jesus Christ, but replacing it with another. Their work had to be undone, and rebuilt from the ground up.

So Erasmus argues, paraphrasing 1 Cor. 3:15, “The first and best thing for those who had been initiated by Christ would have been to pass on nothing except whatever was worthy of Christ. But if this was not done, then the labour on both sides was doubled: for those who had taught there were things to be untaught and for those who had learned there were things to be unlearned”.¹⁵¹ In the same vein, Meyer writes that “those who taught frivolities and cannot teach what the light of the Scriptures brings will indeed suffer a loss, that is, the work will go to waste. Not only this, but they are forced to show their shame, and moreover, to destroy what they built and to rebuild what they destroyed, that is, to recant, disapprove, condemn, and while being afflicted in soul because they led many into error, to labour in every way through which they might bring them back”.¹⁵² A teacher whose work goes to waste because of their unfaithfulness, if granted the chance of repentance through a temporal judgment (through tribulation, Scripture or the Spirit), does have the chance to rebuild. But this will be much more difficult than being faithful from the beginning. Musculus sums it up well: “The teaching of the gospel, therefore, is speaking what has been given us by God. Whoever does not provide this foremost part of teaching acts as less than a teacher of the gospel”.¹⁵³

Faithfulness in sharing God’s teachings is an indispensable condition of being a good teacher and fulfilling God’s commission on one’s life. But a faithful steward also shares the intentions of her master; she desires the same end to come to pass as he desires. A good teacher, then, intends that his teachings serve to further God’s cause of bringing humanity to know him and to find in him their joy and salvation. A few decades before Aquinas’ lectures, Hugh of St. Cher had listed “the handing on of useful things” as one of the five qualities that marked a faithful steward.¹⁵⁴ Aquinas would say more directly that faithful stewards are those who “in all things intend the honour of God and usefulness for his members, as it says, ‘Who do you think is the wise and faithful servant

¹⁵¹ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 868; quoted by Pellikan, *Comm.*, p.195.

¹⁵² Meyer, *Comm.*, fol. 22r.

¹⁵³ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 68.

¹⁵⁴ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, moral., fol. 82r.

whom the Lord will set over his household?’ (Lk. 12:42)”.¹⁵⁵ God is overseeing a world, a world he wants to save, and he chooses different people to serve this world in different ways. Those who serve well see God’s purpose for this economy of divine pedagogy and seek it themselves.

For Calvin, it is not enough to perform the movements properly; rather, one must do it from the heart. “For not everyone who teaches true things”, Calvin writes, “is altogether faithful, but rather the one who endeavours with her soul to advance the kingdom of Christ and to serve the Lord.... For loyalty to Christ is sincerity of conscience. Paul understands by a faithful minister one who both knowingly and with an upright soul fulfills the duties of a good and true minister”.¹⁵⁶ Vermigli, more simply, states that the faithful steward must be called, must nourish the Church and preside over it faithfully and with the utmost prudence.¹⁵⁷ The wise and faithful servant must feed Christ’s sheep, be ‘useful’ to his members and ‘advance the kingdom.’ He must seek, in other words, what God seeks: the glory prepared for his people before the creation of the world (1 Cor. 2:7).

It may happen, sadly, that despite the good qualities and upright intentions of a teacher, that due to one or another cause her students end up falling away from the truth of the gospel. It is not the bad teacher, who more or less consciously corrodes the good foundation of his students’ faith, who is in view here. The fate of that teacher before the judgment has already been mentioned. Instead, in what light is a teacher to be viewed who, as far as it stood with her, sought to faithfully share the teaching of God’s wisdom with his people? How will it stand with her in the judgment? The few commentators who treat this difficult topic all land on the side of mercy.

Theodoret of Cyrrihus, we have already seen, argues that “the teacher is not the cause of a student’s turn for the worse”.¹⁵⁸ Rather, “teachers give instruction in divine things, and their hearers, according to their own choice as to what is to be done in their opinion, make a decision.... The teachers, having taught the forementioned, will not have penalties exacted of them but will be found worthy of salvation”.¹⁵⁹ Here the sense of personal responsibility is very strong, both on the part of the teacher and of the student.

¹⁵⁵ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 4.1.189.

¹⁵⁶ Calvin, *CO49*: 363.

¹⁵⁷ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 92r.

¹⁵⁸ Theodoret of Cyrrihus, *PG82*: 252. Cf. n. 122 above.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, col. 249.

Each is accountable for his or her own actions, and the teacher in particular cannot be held responsible if his lessons are not heeded. In Reformation-era commentators, the sense both of the personal loss on the part of the teacher and the need for the teacher herself to persevere is emphasized. Zwingli, for instance, writes, “When those who had believed in the preaching of the apostles left in persecution, the apostle made a loss of the flock entrusted to him.... But what can the apostle do if his hearers shipwreck themselves? It is to be said, therefore, that nothing is to be accounted to the apostle, so long as he abides steadfast through the fire, that is, through temptation and persecution”.¹⁶⁰ For a pastor to lose the flock under his care, or even some of its members, is a hurtful situation, but in this case, it now falls on them not to lose themselves. Hoffmeister argues along the same lines that a teacher whose students go astray “will suffer the loss” of his “work” but not of his “reward” (1 Cor. 3:14-15)—so long, that is, as he himself does not “depart after his hearers”.¹⁶¹ “God”, Paul reminds us, “by whom you were called into communion with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful” (1:9).

Judgment Belongs to God

Even if someone faces such a tragic loss, and perhaps an unjust reputation because of it, they should persevere in the confidence that true judgment is reserved to God alone. “The one who examines me is the Lord”, Paul writes. “So do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord comes, who will shed light on those things hidden in darkness and make visible the intentions of hearts, and then to each will come their praise from God” (1 Cor. 4:4-5). Only God sees all things, and only he can see the hidden intentions of human hearts, and whether they are striving for faithfulness. In Theophylact of Ohrid’s exact phrase, “The Lord alone judges precisely and without error (ἀκριβῶς καὶ ἀσφαλῶς)”.¹⁶²

Aquinas in particular emphasizes that only God is capable of such a judgment. “To God alone”, he writes, “does it pertain to judge whether I am a faithful minister or not;

¹⁶⁰ Zwingli, *Ep. aliq. Pauli*, p.455.

¹⁶¹ Hoffmeister, *In utr. ad Cor. Hom.*, p.40.

¹⁶² Theophylact, *PG124*: 612.

for this has to do with the intention of the heart, which only God is able to weigh”.¹⁶³ As Calvin reminds us, “wondrous are the recesses and very deep hiding places in the hearts of human beings”.¹⁶⁴ We are imperceptible to one another, and even to ourselves, but not to God. For “there is no creature who is unseen before him, but all are naked and laid bare to his eyes, to whom there is for us an accounting” (Heb. 4:13). For a human creature to pass judgment on the faithfulness—or unfaithfulness—of another human being, called by God to his or her own particular task, would be an impossible usurpation. It would be, in John of Damascus’ words, to “make what belongs to the Master one’s own”.¹⁶⁵ “God”, Aquinas asserts, “reserves the hidden matters to his judgment. For there are things hidden to us, which lay in the heart or take place in hiddenness, as it says, ‘what you say in your hearts, on your beds feel remorse for them’ (Ps. 4:4). Thus, a human being is a rash judge of these things, like an appointed judge who exceeds the form of his mandate with a case that was not committed to him”.¹⁶⁶

This is perhaps especially so when it comes to ourselves. Paul raises the warning, “For I am not aware of anything in myself, but I am not justified in that” (1 Cor. 4:4a). Lefèvre d’Étaples, one of Calvin’s influences, cautions, “Whoever judges himself to be good and a worthy servant of God usurps to himself the judgment of his Lord. And this is pride, and for just this reason he is a wicked and unworthy servant”.¹⁶⁷ Rather, according to the Reformers, one must simply live in trust that God has already forgiven whatever sins we may commit in our ever sinful, ever saintly attempts to fulfill his call on our lives. Knowing that judgment is, in Calvin’s phrase, “the right and office of Christ”,¹⁶⁸ the same Christ who died in the place of our judgment, we should pay no attention to the condemnation (or praise) of others or ourselves, but look only to our merciful, crucified judge, faithfully taking up our cross to follow him.

It is, after all, God who has called us, God who has commissioned us, and God who has gifted and tasked us in his economy. It is to him alone that we teachers of his saving truth are answerable. The world has its own glory, but it is fading away. “The one who has fulfilled his office with integrity”, writes Erasmus, “will receive eternal praise from God,

¹⁶³ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 4.1.193.

¹⁶⁴ Calvin, *CO49*: 366.

¹⁶⁵ John of Damascus, *PG95*: 600.

¹⁶⁶ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 4.1.195.

¹⁶⁷ Lefèvre d’Étaples, *S. Pauli Ep.*, fol. 111r.

¹⁶⁸ Calvin, *CO49*: 366.

even if he was commended very little by human beings. The one who did otherwise will be shamed and punished by God's condemnation, however much he was held in regard by human beings".¹⁶⁹ For, Calvin informs us, "all the world's applause is to be considered as nothing, for in just a little while its vanity will be demonstrated by the heavenly judgment".¹⁷⁰ It may even lead to quite the reversal in our perception of the history of theology. Many who are now considered great may be small in God's judgment, and many who are now little considered may have been the truly faithful ones. As Musculus puts it, rather daringly, "Many are now held as orthodox whom we will know in that day to be the utmost heretics, and conversely, many are held as heretics whom we will see acknowledged by the Lord as the true faithful".¹⁷¹ To the extent that we are able to discern signs of faithfulness to God in a teacher's speaking and writing, we should 'use' them to lead us into the knowledge of God. But we can never, ultimately, pass judgment on their faithfulness, on the inner intentions of their hearts. For "who are you, judging another's household servant (οἰκέτην)? To his own lord he will stand or fall, but he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand" (Rom. 14:4).

Conclusion

God, in his richly-coloured wisdom (Eph. 3:10), is bringing together a broad house, a global οἶκος. "After this I looked", John tells us, "and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Rev. 7:9-10 ESV). As the Spirit pushes the teaching of the gospel to the ends of the earth, universalizing the teaching of Christ, he enlightens and enflames many hearts and minds to faith and the love of God.

In this οἶκος of God there is much work to be done, and many people through whom he accomplishes it, but "it is the same God who works out everything in everyone" (1 Cor. 12:6). Theologians have a particular role within this οἶκος, as the economy of divine teaching is part of God's greater economy of salvation. God uses teachers of

¹⁶⁹ Erasmus, *Paraphr.*, col. 870.

¹⁷⁰ Calvin, *CO49*: 356.

¹⁷¹ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 112.

theology to bring his people to know his eternal wisdom in little human measure, the wisdom that Christ is for us and to which our hearts awaken by his Spirit. God seeks faithfulness from those he calls as teachers, laying down certain methods of speaking and teaching and ruling others out, assigning work that demands certain moral and intellectual qualities but suffers in their absence, and in the end, subjecting them to his own perfect and all-seeing judgment. All this is part of his overarching purpose, his grand οἰκονομία of salvation, in which the Christ slain from the beginning of the world is “bringing many sons and daughters to glory” (Heb. 2:10). For this is, after all, the end-goal of all God’s works, “that”, in a treasured verse of Aquinas and Calvin, “they would know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent” (Jn. 17:3).

Chapter Seven | The End of the Divine Pedagogy

“This is the final cause of all Christ’s labours, that when we are saved,
we would then cede to God the whole glory.”
— Peter Martyr Vermigli

God teaches us about himself through other people. This simple statement, with which I began, has by this point received significant elaboration in terms of the economy of God’s teaching. This teaching of God takes a particular shape in the economy because of the Trinity which God is; God’s outworking of salvation in history decisively alters the course of this pedagogy as the Wisdom of God takes flesh in Jesus Christ and his Spirit nows shares that wisdom with us; this divine wisdom is seen to be fundamentally different from any human or natural wisdom and inaccessible to people without the Spirit of God; the Spirit works to birth faith and love in human hearts, roots out the vices that prevent their understanding of his truth and gives them facility in spiritual judgment; some of those reborn by the Spirit are chosen to be made into teachers of theology and given corresponding authority by God; these theologians, finally, are directed by the Spirit to teach with spiritual words and a spiritual method in faithfulness to his calling on their lives and in light of their eventual judgment before the face of Christ.

But to what end? Why does God teach us about himself through other people? God has acted and orchestrated elements both creaturely and divine, not only commanding the course of human lives and communities, but even “emptying his own self and taking the form of a slave, becoming in likeness a man” (Phil. 2:7). What could command such a great sacrifice on the part of God? Since God suffers no reaction to what he has made, the answer is, of course, a simple one: God does it for love, the love he eternally is¹—or to say the same thing, God does it “for us human beings and for our salvation”.² The Nicene Creed is here speaking of why God’s Son took on human existence some two thousand years ago, but God’s purpose in teaching us, both before and after Christ’s earthly mission, is the same. In his fashioning of the cosmos in wisdom, in his giving of the law and sending of the prophets, in his incarnate teaching of his disciples, and in his provision of teachers of theology for the Church, God means to teach us how

¹ For a contemporary defense of *apatheia* as God’s freedom to love, see David Bentley Hart, “No Shadow of Turning: On Divine Impassibility,” *Pro Ecclesia* 11/2 (Spring 2002): 184-206.

² “δι’ ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν”.

we can “be saved” (Acts 16:30) and “inherit eternal life” (Mk. 10:17)—in other words, God wants us to know τὰ πρὸς εἰρήνην, “what makes for peace” (Lk. 19:42).

God’s Saving Pedagogy and Pedagogical Salvation

In God’s saving activity he acts as our Teacher. God’s deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery was, among other things, meant to teach them that he is not like other gods (Ex. 12:12, 20:2-3; Deut. 4:34) and how they ought to live as a nation of peace (Ex. 23:9; Deut. 5:15, 24:17-18); the salvation accomplished in Christ’s body was, among other things, a way of teaching the world that all earthly and demonic power is broken (1 Cor. 15:24; Col. 2:15; Rev. 1:18) and how they ought to live as a people ruled by Christ’s peace (Rom. 5:1-5; Phil. 2:3-8; Col. 3:15; 1 Pet. 3:17-18). Conversely, in God’s teaching activity he is also the world’s Saviour. In the law and the prophets, God is teaching Israel that salvation is found in him alone (Lev. 26:1-13; Is. 43:11; Hos. 14:1-9) and how to avoid returning to the peace-stealing ways of life in Egypt (Lev. 18:3; Deut. 12:31, 17:16; Ezek. 16:20-22); in the teaching of Jesus, God is telling the world he has sent them salvation (Mt. 11:28-30; Mk. 1:15; Lk. 11:20; Jn. 6:35-40) and how they may escape all the realities that oppose their peace (Mt. 6:25-34, 18:15-22; Mk. 9:43-48; Jn. 16:33).

The fruit or end of God’s sharing of his wisdom with humanity, then, is their salvation. All of God’s saving οἰκονομία, of which the economy of the divine pedagogy is a part, coalesces in this purpose: “that they would know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent” (Jn. 17:3). It is only through the gospel of Christ that we come to know God in a way that we can be saved; the wisdom embedded in the creation, as we saw, does not suffice for this purpose. We must first be brought to faith and new spiritual life through the gospel before we can perceive the ‘words’ God speaks in the things he has made. Reflecting on 1 Cor. 1:21, subject to so much commentary on this dynamic, Hemmingsen writes, “The teaching is here observed, first, that people cannot come to a saving knowledge of God by the world’s wisdom; second, that the gospel alone gives birth to saving knowledge of God; third, that all people without the knowledge of the gospel are stuck in damnation; and fourth, that the fruit of the believed preaching of the gospel is the salvation of souls”.³

³ Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.21.

This salvation, which we both experience now and will experience fully in the eschaton, has certain effects on our minds, hearts and bodies. Hugh of St. Cher elaborates especially on the cognitive effects produced by the learning of God's saving wisdom, and their perfection in glory. That Christ "was made for us wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:30) relates, first, "to the perfection of the speculative intellect; second, to the ordering of the practical intellect to works; third, to the growth of both; and fourth, to the consummation which will be in glory". Thus, the expression of this wisdom is "in the ordering" of one's intellect, and so one's life, "toward God".⁴ While the wisdom that Christ is for us relates particularly to cognitive renewal, this is of course inseparable from and accompanied by other forms of renewal that attend new life in Christ. Progress in wisdom has effects moral, spiritual and affective. For example, the knowledge of our sin enables repentance and self-control; the increased perception of our worth in God's eyes frees us from the anxious efforts to establish our own; the object of our faith, the crucified Christ, inspires love in our hearts. Growth in these teachings, then, is simultaneously a growth in our salvation, a coming closer to the knowledge of God, who makes us, and all things, new.

When Paul comes to preach in Corinth, it is understandable in the light of God's teaching and saving activity that the apostle's teaching is wholly given over to "Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). The cross is the centre of all God's works and ways in the world; it is the means of the world's salvation. This is also why the apostle was so concerned that his method of preaching not in any way "empty the cross of Christ" (1:17c). That is the great danger of bad teaching: impeding the salvation God desires to effect in his students by bringing the fruits of the cross to realization in their lives. The cross, writes Cajetan, is "the power of God, the saviour of all who are being saved", obviously using metonymy for the One crucified on it.⁵ Christ's death on the cross is "full as a cornucopia from which we drink the knowledge of God's will and his immense love, true and eternal life and happiness, justification, peace and joy".⁶ Yet although "the cross of Christ is full of divine power", Cajetan writes, "it is emptied—not in itself, but on the part of the one preaching it—when preaching is founded on human wisdom".⁷ The cross on which Christ died is, in itself, 'full of divine power'; nevertheless, this power can be

⁴ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, moral., fol. 76r.

⁵ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 41v.

⁶ Musculus, *Comm.*, col. 32.

⁷ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, 41r-v.

hindered by an improper teaching method, either treating human philosophy as foundational for and legitimating the permissibility of divine teaching or clouding the light of God's truth with one's own personality or skill. The cross cannot be emptied 'in itself,' but it can be emptied 'on the part of the one preaching it' by preaching "in a wisdom of words" (1:17b).⁸

The Devil's Counter-Pedagogy

God's intention is that, through preaching and teaching surrounding the salvation he accomplished through his Son's death and resurrection, "all humanity would be saved and come to a recognition of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Accordingly, a certain way of teaching the cross is required of those he commissions, gifts and empowers in his economy as teachers of his Word. This way of teaching is translucent to the divine power at work through them and directs their students unhindered to Christ and him crucified. By acting in obedience to God's lordship and under the inner teaching of the Spirit, teachers allow their students to come into contact with, in Calvin's words, "the sole and bare power of the Spirit".⁹ This is how God's pedagogy operates in this period of history.

But God is not the only agent at work in the world—God is, of course, not simply one agent among others; rather, he is the agent without whom there would be no other agency. The ultimate outcome of God's saving intention, and so his *οἰκονομία*, is not in question. Within the outworking of God's purposes, however, there is permitted a limited time and a limited space to the work of the devil and his agents (Job 1:12; Lk. 22:53; Jn. 19:11). Within these bounds, he is allowed to do his work of deceit, temptation and robbery. "But the God of peace will trample Satan under your feet with swiftness" (Rom. 16:20).

God's authority remains insuperable. As ministers of Christ, we are called to be servants of this lordship and not act as lords ourselves; we are decidedly "not the Lord".¹⁰ "But Lucifer", Hugh of St. Cher writes, "fell from ministerial position, since he wanted to act not as a minister but as the Lord".¹¹ Now fallen, "the devil also has his stewards" who

⁸ See chapter six, "The Problem of Method."

⁹ Cf. ch. 6, n. 32 above.

¹⁰ See chapter five, "God's Authorship and Authority."

¹¹ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, moral., fol. 78v. Cf. ch. 4, n. 38.

oversee his works, a destructive inversion of God's saving economy.¹² These are those 'bad' ministers who destroy the foundation of faith in Christ, undoing what God accomplished through his true ministers. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes of the false apostles more sharply than in the first. They are "deceitful workers, shape-shifting into apostles of Christ. And no wonder, since Satan himself changes form into an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:13-14). Parading as teachers of wisdom, their true purpose is to prevent humanity coming to know the true wisdom, the wisdom found in Christ and him crucified.

The devil accomplishes this, where he can, by sowing temptations to sin, encouraging the vices of the natural person which hinder sight of the divine truth. "And if our gospel is hidden, it is hidden in those who are perishing, in whom the god of this world has blinded the thoughts of unbelievers so that the enlightenment of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, would not shine out" (2 Cor. 4:3-4). In addition, the devil's ministers draw attention to themselves, through pride, ambition and self-serving rhetorical displays. As true ministers, in contrast, "we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ the Lord, and ourselves your servants on his account" (2 Cor. 4:5). The devil will attempt to turn a teacher's attention on himself and insinuate pride in—what he falsely considers—his own abilities and successes. "Thus Satan", Maior writes, "deceives many through praise, so that they begin to be pleased with themselves and attribute to themselves what ought to be attributed to God, and in this way, from pride and presumption, they lose the gift of the Holy Spirit they previously possessed".¹³ Then devoid of the Spirit's light, they gradually fall away into greater error.

This self-concern, for which praise is a temptation, also contributes to the many divisions in the Church and among its teachers. Through envy of other teachers' abilities and, perhaps, audiences and popularity, the devil encourages controversies and antagonism. As Catharinus puts it, "The devil certainly sowed great divisions in the Church on account of jealousies of this kind, since each one loves not so much the truth as their own glory".¹⁴ Unable to be content if the truth comes from another's mind and mouth, they are drawn to contest it or dismiss it, stirring up senseless arguments born of

¹² Ibid., exp. gloss., fol. 81v.

¹³ Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 48r.

¹⁴ Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.142.

academic pride and pretension. This leads their students, too often subject to the same vices, to side with one teacher over against others.

In general, the devil's means are subtle, making use of what appears common and justifiable in the world's eyes—honours, reputation, professional and personal allegiances—to achieve his ends. As Calvin writes, "This is the usual cunning of Satan: if he cannot close off the way of teaching, he secretly sneaks in to attack it; if he cannot suppress it with contrary lies because it continues to surface, he digs hidden tunnels to undermine it; and if he is finally unable to estrange human souls from it, he makes it happen that they fall away bit by bit".¹⁵ Resisting the devil's counter-pedagogical intentions, and so his temptations to ambition, presumption and controversy, requires a sound faculty of judgment. This means, as always, that one needs the Spirit. It is the Spirit who enables us to "discern all things" (1 Cor. 2:15), including the dangers that lay in academic successes (and failures), the more or less pure intentions of our students and fellow teachers and the darknesses that persist in our own hearts. By granting us his vision, and the new moral-spiritual life he brings, the Spirit—whether in stages or in a moment—makes us "perfect," τέλειοι (1 Cor. 2:6).

The 'Perfect' Person

In one sense, the goal of the divine pedagogy is human salvation; another way of expressing the same reality is to call it the perfection of the human person. By teaching our students, we are leading them toward fullness in Christ, the complete expression of being "renewed in knowledge in line with the image of one's Creator" (Col. 3:10) or being transformed "by the renewal of one's mind" (Rom. 12:2). Since Christ is our wisdom—the eternal Wisdom become wisdom for us—it is in teaching about him, and what we possess in him, that we guide our students into the totality of the moral-spiritual renewal available by the Spirit. It is "Christ in you, the hope of glory, whom we announce, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom in order to present everyone perfect in Christ" (Col. 1:27-28). By coming to perfection in Christ, τελειότης ἐν Χριστῷ, one moves with certainty and assurance toward the glory that is to come.

¹⁵ Calvin, *argumentum*, CO49: 298.

Now, commentators did not all agree about what constitutes this ‘perfection.’ (It is complicated by the fact that it is to these ‘perfect’ that Paul says “we speak wisdom,” 1 Cor. 2:6. How commentators understood this ‘wisdom’ affects who they understand these ‘perfect’ to be.¹⁶) For some, it meant the perfect exercise of spiritual judgment or discernment; for others, the perfection of certain faculties, such as faith and the understanding; and for still others, it meant simply true faith, the confident belief that salvation is found in Christ and his cross. All of these, one will notice, are features of the “spiritual person” (1 Cor. 2:15), the person made capable by the Spirit of grasping the divine wisdom, now developed to their fullest expression.¹⁷

The earliest commentators to locate perfection in a kind of discerning faith see it as the ability to differentiate between good and evil, and accordingly, to demonstrate moral uprightness. Thus Origen and Augustine both cite Hebrews to fill out Paul’s reference in 1 Corinthians: “But solid food is for the perfect, who have through practice trained their senses to discriminate between good and evil” (5:14).¹⁸ The perfect, in this case, are no longer able to be deceived by appearances; they recognize when the devil’s temptation is lurking behind a veil of righteousness. As a result, they can more perfectly obey God’s commands and resist what they are able to recognize as sin. A similar concern for seeing beyond appearances is present in Ambrosiaster’s definition: “For they are wise and perfect who do not have more faith in words than in things”.¹⁹ The tendency of the ‘animal person’ is to be misled by their desire for material things into judging everything by its appearance, rather than discerning whether or not it corresponds to the reality. This was the case with the Corinthians, who attributed far too much value to the rhetoric of the false apostles, rather than discerning the wisdom behind the simple preaching of the crucified Christ. Calvin, finally, speaks of this judgment more generally. The ‘perfect’ are “not those who have acquired a full and absolute wisdom, but who are possessed of a sound and uncorrupt judgment”.²⁰ The perfect, spiritual person ‘discerns all things,’

¹⁶ See chapter three, “The Content of Divine Wisdom,” “The ‘Protestant’ Option: All Wisdom Enclosed in the Cross,” and “The ‘Catholic’ Option: The Twofold Wisdom of Christ’s Two Natures.” Zwingli, Bullinger and Meyer, for instance, do not feature here because they take ‘wisdom among the perfect’ as a figure of speech for ‘perfect wisdom,’ thus denying that the ‘perfect’ are people at all (cf. ch. 3, nn. 99-100).

¹⁷ See chapter four, “What Makes a Person ‘Spiritual’.”

¹⁸ Origen, *fr.* 9, p.238 (cf. ch. 3, n. 105 above). Augustine, *lo. ev. tr.* 98.4; quoted by Gloss, col. 209.

¹⁹ Ambrosiaster, *CSEL*81/2: 23; quoted by Raban Maur, *PL*112: 22.

²⁰ Calvin, *CO*49: 336. Cf. Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.30.

including good and evil, truth and falsity, and appearance and reality. They are able to see anything “as it really is in itself” without deception or blindness.²¹

Another line of commentary related perfection not to the exercise of judgment in particular, but to the possession of faith and spiritual understanding more broadly. The development of one’s human faculties through learning the divine wisdom by work of the Spirit is a strengthening of the foundation of faith; thus, the perfect on this account are those who are, in Primateucci’s phrase, “well instructed and stable in faith”.²² Haymo of Auxerre associated this advanced state especially with teachers, those like Timothy, Titus and Sosthenes who “had progressed in faith in order to be companions and helpers in the office of preaching”.²³ Robert of Melun likewise considers knowledge to be the domain of teachers (*clerici*), but offers a realistic assessment of the way these teachers sometimes “are less constant in faith than the peasants”. The peasants or “laypeople”, conversely, are often more perfect in faith while “they nevertheless do not know much of the secrets of faith”. To be perfect in both faith and knowledge is the mark of an apostle, but the apostle Paul himself is more concerned that one be perfect in faith than in knowledge.²⁴ What Robert here prizes apart is better not separated, though his characterization bears a kind of self-evidence in common experience. Aquinas says similarly that to be perfect in faith or knowledge, in Robert’s terms, are both forms of wisdom. In his *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas at one point faces the objection that teaching comes by study whereas wisdom is a gift of the Holy Spirit. In response, he differentiates two kinds of wise people: one who judges well about how to live properly because they live this way, and another who judges well because they have been instructed in how to live properly. Like Robert, Aquinas believes Paul is speaking of the first kind in 1 Cor. 2:15, an active, living wisdom given as a gift of the Spirit.²⁵

As we will see in a moment, Aquinas relates each kind of wisdom to different faculties (the will and understanding, respectively) properly joined together in the ‘perfect.’ It would perhaps be better, however, to refuse the disjunction on other theological grounds, namely those concerning the economy of the divine pedagogy. The

²¹ Cf. Meyer, ch. 4, n. 123.

²² Primateucci, *Lit. exp. ep. Pauli*, fol. 84r.

²³ Haymo, *PL*117: 519.

²⁴ Robert of Melun, *Qu. ep. Pauli*, p.179.

²⁵ Aquinas, *ST* 1a.1.6 arg. 3 and ad 3.

wisdom attained through study *is* wisdom given by the Holy Spirit, because only the person with the Spirit can properly understand it. Study is but one of the coordinated means by which God the teacher inculcates wisdom in his students; the reading of Scripture, the preached Word, and even the inward motions of the Spirit (according to Aquinas²⁶) are others. Ideally, these all work together in unity to produce a student who is developing in both her intellectual understanding and her practical will as a follower of the wisdom of Christ. The Spirit, Aquinas contends, both “enlightens the mind” and “kindles the affections”.²⁷ Too often however, as Robert of Melun recognized, we are like the ‘clerics’ who are not pliant to the Spirit’s moving of our will and affections; we develop an understanding which is merely intellectual and not yet “faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6). Only in obedience to the apostle’s command can we be ‘perfect’: “But become doers, and not only hearers, of the word” (Jam. 1:22).²⁸

Aquinas’ own definition of perfection attends to both the faculty of understanding (to be wise by instruction) as well as the faculty of the will (to be wise by living according to God’s law). These are the two faculties which differentiate the human being from other animals: the understanding and the will. To be a ‘perfect’ person, therefore, means to be perfect in both these differentiating faculties. Aquinas writes:

But they are said to be perfect in understanding whose minds are raised above all fleshly and sensible things, who can grasp spiritual and intelligible realities, of whom Heb. 5:14 speaks, “But solid food is for the perfect, who have through practice trained their senses to discriminate between good and evil.” But they are perfect in will whose wills, raised above all temporal things, cling to God alone and his precepts. For this reason, Matt. 5:48, following the commands of love, adds, “Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Since, then, the teaching of the faith is directed to this, that “faith works through love,” as Gal. 5:6 puts it, it is necessary for the one instructed in the teaching of the faith not only to be well disposed in their understanding for grasping and believing, but also in their will and affections well disposed for loving and working.²⁹

²⁶ See ST 1a2ae.106-108 on the “new law” of the gospel as the grace of the indwelling Holy Spirit (106.1) acting as an “interior *habitus*” causing us to pursue “what is appropriate to grace” and avoid “what is opposed to grace” (108.1 ad 2).

²⁷ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.3.113. Cf. ch. 4, n. 43.

²⁸ Cf. Aquinas, ST 1a.1.4 on theology as a mixed science, primarily ‘speculative’ but also ‘practical.’

²⁹ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.1.81.

The ‘spiritual person,’ on Aquinas’ view, has the Spirit lighting their will on fire and shedding light on their understanding;³⁰ the ‘perfect’ person is simply the complete and developed form of such a human being. No longer bound by their desires or the form of their thinking to sensible or temporal realities, they are free to ‘cling to God alone’ and so love God and neighbour perfectly while comprehending higher, spiritual realities. Thus, like the first reading, being perfect involves a transformation—or better, a restoration—of particular human mental faculties: in the first case, the faculty of judgment, and in this case, the faculties of understanding, will and affections.

For the third and final reading, however, the change is diagnosed less analytically. The perfect are simply, as Chrysostom says, “those who have believed. For those who know that human things are very feeble, and who despise them, are the ‘perfect’”.³¹ This could be termed—anachronistically and schematically—as the ‘Lutheran’ reading of Paul’s τέλειοι. Here, perfection is effectively identical with being spiritual, having the Holy Spirit. It does not necessarily imply a restoration or modification of existing faculties, but the introduction of a new capacity: faith. This faith, however, can be seen to bring changes along with it.

For instance, this faith can be stabilized and strengthened (as also with Primaticci’s ‘stable in faith’), and can have accompanying phenomena, such as a confession of faith, a believing mind, an inner effect and power, and the ability to comfort others in temptation. Hervé of Bourg-Dieu, for example, writes that the ‘perfect’ are those who “confess the cross of Christ to be wisdom with a testimony of power. For all perfect men understand it to be the highest wisdom”.³² Faith, then, is associated with testimony and a believing movement of the intelligence. For Georg Maior, a Lutheran, faith comes together with an inward sense of the gospel’s power. Paul “calls the ‘perfect’ those who truly believe, who are now ‘strengthened’ and ‘rooted’ in Christ Jesus through faith (cf. Eph. 3:16-17), who ‘are not carried about by any wind of teaching’ (Eph. 4:14), whose faith is not in human wisdom but in the power of God (cf. 1 Cor. 2:5)”.³³ They “sense the force and effectiveness of the gospel in their souls”.³⁴ Faith, accordingly, makes one

³⁰ Cf. ch. 4, n. 115.

³¹ Chrysostom, *Hom.* 7.1, PG61: 55. Cf. ch. 3, n. 95.

³² Hervé, *PL*181: 832.

³³ Maior, *En. prim. ad Cor.*, fol. 27r.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 29r.

‘perfect’ because of one’s perfect trust in the salvation accomplished on the cross; one will look nowhere else to find wisdom, because here is the redemption of the world. Thus, Bugenhagen, also a Lutheran, argues that the ‘perfect’ more fully understand the righteousness of God in Christ and, therefore, bearing “contempt for all our righteousness”, “are able themselves to console tempted brothers”.³⁵

Of course, the end toward which our faith presses is not yet in our possession. “Forgetting what is behind and stretching toward what is ahead, in line with the target I pursue the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14). It is in this sense that Bugenhagen and Vermigli read Paul’s reference to the ‘perfect’ in 1 Cor. 2:6. Knowing themselves not yet perfect, believers nevertheless “always run and advance, taught by the word of the gospel and temptations”; holding to the same faith and gospel, they “make progress until the perfect day of the resurrection, when [they] will run to Christ”.³⁶ Vermigli, as has been seen, argues that there are levels of participation in the “mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16), and that we are all rather more at the beginning than the end of coming to share in this mind;³⁷ here he likewise sees us as standing within a progression, very much at the beginning but stretching toward the end to which God has called us. Paul, he writes, “calls the believers ‘perfect,’ even though in this life we never become absolutely perfect; yet, we are thus called because we hold the τέλος, that is, the end, in hope, and in this way we can be τέλειοι (perfect), because we hope for our end and contend for it with our powers”.³⁸ In this way, the ‘perfect’ have confidence to persevere toward the end for which Christ died, their salvation and entrance into eternal glory.

‘The Glory Prepared’ from and for Eternity

God our teacher has prepared a reward for those students who readily pursue the way of wisdom shown us in Christ through faith. “But we speak the wisdom of God hidden in a mystery, which God predestined before the ages for our glory” (1 Cor. 2:7). This reward is, like all the other elements in the divine pedagogy, his gift and his grace. In order to lead us to this end, God has given us the prophets and apostles, the written Scriptures, teachers and preachers, the Spirit who lives within us, and foremost, Christ made wisdom

³⁵ Bugenhagen, *Comm.*, fol. fol. [F6]v-[F7]r, F4v; cf. fol. Gr.

³⁶ Ibid., fol. [F7]v-[F8]r.

³⁷ Cf. ch. 4, n. 140.

³⁸ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 41v.

for us. And to crown these gifts, God gives their effect the reward of eternal glory.

Accordingly, we should not 'glory' or boast in the gifts, but in their divine giver.

Nicholas of Amiens writes, "'Let it be far from me,' due to me, 'to glory' (Gal. 6:14). For we ought to glory in the one from whom we receive glory", who is Christ, as the remainder of the quotation from Galatians makes clear.³⁹ Creaturely gifts, such as Scripture and human teachers, do not themselves bring us salvation, but only lead us to the One who has made provision for it in his cross. It might seem a great thing to be God's minister and something we ought to glory in, Aquinas tells us, but our situation is not like a person approaching a king, unable to enter without the intervention of one of his ministers; instead, "Christ's faithful have access to God by faith, as it says in Rom. 5:2, 'Through whom we have access to God through faith and this grace in which we stand'".⁴⁰ That we come to faith through the work of God's preachers and teachers is, as we have seen, the result of God's working in and through them, not their own human movements and efforts.⁴¹ God makes use of them in his wisdom because they are fitting tools or instruments by which to effect what he desires, "bringing many sons and daughters to glory" (Heb. 2:10).

In his saving works, God makes us his children, sons and daughters under his care and instruction. "And in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' it shall be said to them, 'Children of the living God'" (Hos. 1:10 ESV). The teaching of God's wisdom has the same purpose as God's justification of the sinner: to preserve humanity from death and to welcome them into a kingdom. "And also", Bullinger writes, "the end of this teaching is incomparable. For it makes them sons not of just any king but of the greatest and best, God".⁴² This, of course, is not a new course of action on God's part, but one predestined in his wise counsel; neither, accordingly, is this "a new wisdom", Cajetan writes, "but one predetermined before the ages by God, guide to our glory, to the glory of eternal happiness prepared for us—if, that is, we are led by participation in such wisdom to eternal glory. For this wisdom concerns the mystery of the incarnation of the Word of God for leading the 'sons of adoption' into eternal glory".⁴³ It is by 'participation,' by

³⁹ Nicholas of Amiens, *Comm. Porr.*, p.40.

⁴⁰ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 3.1.133.

⁴¹ See chapter four, "New Life in the Spirit," and chapter six, "Our Outward and God's Inward Teaching."

⁴² Bullinger, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 22r.

⁴³ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 43r.

coming to share, in the wisdom of the Word's incarnation that we have the effects of this saving incarnation realized in us; participation in (or the revelation of) wisdom is, in this sense, the cognitive or mental side of the effects of salvation. By coming to know where our salvation comes from, we are led toward the 'glory of eternal happiness prepared for us'; we become the "son" to whom the Father speaks his Wisdom (Prov. 1:8, 2:1, 3:11-12, etc.).

This is, again, something only possible for the spiritual person. "For it is through the Spirit", the Gloss states, "that we understand God to have prepared a reward for the good".⁴⁴ The knowledge that such an end exists is itself a matter of spiritual comprehension, as are the saving truths which guide us to that end. It is through this "wisdom of God hidden in a mystery" (1 Cor. 2:7) that "we obtain glorious life and eternal blessedness".⁴⁵ The knowledge of this wisdom is, to anticipate, the knowledge of God himself; to know God is the glory of the human being. But this is only for the one whose heart the Lord opened to believe (cf. Acts 16:14). It is the glory of "all the faithful", Aquinas teaches, "that in the plain light they may know the things which are now preached in a mystery, as it says in Jn. 17:3, 'This is eternal life, that they would know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent'".⁴⁶ To see God, 'in the plain light,' is the proper destiny of 'all the faithful'; it is the fulfillment of the human being. The vision of God is the satisfaction of all our life's intentions and movements, in all the ways we access reality—eyes, ears, heart, mind and spirit.

In 1 Cor. 2:9, Paul quotes (fairly loosely) the prophet Isaiah: "What things the eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, nor has gone up into the human heart, God has prepared for those who love him" (cf. Is. 64:4). For commentators, the apostle's mention of the eye, the ear and the heart signal that this glory, 'what things God has prepared,' is an invisible and transcendent glory, a spiritual glory beyond the capacity of any natural human being. As Lombard writes, echoing the Gloss, "'What things the eye' of the body 'has not seen,' because it is not a colour; 'nor the ear heard,' because it is not a sound; 'nor has gone up into the human heart,' because it is not a human being, that is, fleshly, but it is spirit, that is, the spiritual person who knows.... Or, 'nor has gone up into the

⁴⁴ Interlinear Gloss, cols. 211-12.

⁴⁵ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 39r.

⁴⁶ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.1.87. Cf. Lombard, *PL*191: 1548.

human heart,' because it is not anything earthly".⁴⁷ The reward that God has prepared for those who love him is nothing less than himself; he possesses neither colour nor sound nor anything earthly, that he might be seen or heard or go up from the earth into the human heart. "Such is what", Primaticci adds, "God has prepared from eternity for those who love him with the whole affection of their mind, namely, the knowledge of God himself which they had not known".⁴⁸ In receiving this knowledge, we will at last partake, according to Cajetan, of "that which exceeds everything desirable by the human will".⁴⁹ Not only is God above our bodily senses and mind; he is even above our will. God is more than we could ever ask or imagine (cf. Eph. 3:20); he is greater than the capacity of our hearts' desire.

Calvin's exegesis of 1 Cor. 2:9 is more contextually-focused. The Reformer, influenced by the attention of Renaissance humanism to history, is concerned here with Paul's use of Isaiah's prophecy. The apostle's citation, specifically, "seems an abuse contrary to [the prophet's] mind". Isaiah is dealing with the captivity of Israel and desolation of Jerusalem (64:10). What does the fact that "God has always brought aid to the neediness of his people" have to do with "the promises of eternal life"?⁵⁰ The resulting exegesis is perhaps less theologically subtle than his medieval predecessors, but it is deeply pastoral: in God's daily provisions, our gaze should not "be fixed on their present appearance"; rather, "the one who would value them correctly will not consider them bare, but dress them with the fatherly love of God as with clothing, and so will be led from temporal gifts to eternal life".⁵¹ Isaiah's prophecy foresees temporal provisions of God's fatherly care for Israel; that Paul cites it, in turn, in relation to the glory predestined by God before all ages means that we ought to discern an intrinsic connection between God's temporal graces and the eternal grace of life before the face of God. This eternal life is not simply further wondrous divine acts that Israel's eyes have not *yet* seen nor ears *yet* heard, already realities to which "the human understanding does not extend",⁵² but a life beyond the capacities of this body. "Dear ones, we are now

⁴⁷ Lombard, *PL*191: 1550. Lombard is rearranging the interlinear Gloss, cols. 211-12, in turn partially quoting Augustine, *ep.* 130.8, *CSEL*44: 59; quoted partially by Raban Maur, *PL*112: 24, and Hervé, *PL*181: 833.

⁴⁸ Primaticci, *Lit. exp. ep. Pauli*, fol. 84v.

⁴⁹ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 43v.

⁵⁰ Calvin, *CO*49: 339-40. Cf. Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 46r.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, col. 340.

⁵² *Ibid.*

children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made apparent. We know that when he appears we will be like him, for we will see him as he is" (1 Jn. 3:2).

This transformation will occur at the end of this age, when Christ returns to restore all things and hand over the kingdom to the Father. Until then, we remain firm in the hope of enjoying the reward of God himself, knowing that the Spirit has revealed this promise to us. Hervé writes, commenting on "what things the eye has not seen" (1 Cor. 2:9):

Thus, those things were unknown to human beings for ages, but God revealed them to us because we are above human beings,⁵³ not through the industry of our own natural powers but by his Spirit, by whom he enlightens our minds that we may understand those ineffable goods which he has prepared for his lovers. They will possess these at that time when "God will be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). Therefore, God is all those good things which he has prepared for those who love him and are waiting for him.⁵⁴

It is crucial, for Aquinas, that God is preparing these 'ineffable goods' specifically for those who love him, 'for his lovers', as Hervé puts it. This is because "the essential reward of eternal glory is owed to love, as it says in Jn. 14:21, 'If anyone loves me they will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and show myself to him,' in which the perfection of eternal glory consists; and Job 36:33 (Vulg.), 'He tells of it,' that is, the light of glory, 'to his friend, because it is his possession'".⁵⁵ The perfection of eternal life consists in just this: Christ's loving us who love him and showing himself to us who long to see him. He tells us his friends of his glorious light and welcomes us into it. This is "the vision of God", the "whole reward and eternal life";⁵⁶ this is our satisfaction, our true and lasting happiness, and the destiny for which we have been made.

Conclusion

The divine pedagogy is an economy, possessing an intended end. To reach the term of our journey, the destination marked out for us by God our teacher, we follow the path of wisdom announced to us in the Crucified. God first fashioned, in Wisdom, creatures capable of relationship—and even a kind of friendship—with himself, and communicates

⁵³ See Hervé's comments on 1 Cor. 3:3, "Are you not human beings?": *PL*181: 839. Cf. Cassiodorus, *PL*68: 512; quoted partially by Sedulius, *PL*103: 133 and ps.-Jerome, *PL*30: 724.

⁵⁴ Hervé, *PL*181: 834.

⁵⁵ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.2.98.

⁵⁶ Denis the Carthusian, *Comm.*, fol. 40v.

himself to us in and through this same Wisdom. This Wisdom, further, sends his heralds into the “highways and hedges” (Lk. 14:23) and causes them to cry aloud “in the street” and “in the markets” (Prov. 1:20). Some hear and resist, their minds blinded by pride, envy and ignorance; others, however, hear and believe, their hearts made pliant and soft by “the Spirit of wisdom and understanding” (Is. 11:2; cf. Eph. 1:17). To aid them, God makes a number of people specially able to teach the knowledge of God to others, building on the foundation of faith a solid structure of pious, simple and useful teaching. In their speaking, and their students’ listening, the Spirit of this wisdom is at work, impressing creative power on hearts and granting holy light to minds. Christ, the Wisdom of God, thus creates and governs an economy by which to shepherd his faithful toward their ultimate rest and utter joy. The “final cause”, according to Vermigli, of all these “labours of Christ” is “that when we are saved, we would then cede to God the whole glory”.⁵⁷ At last face to face with the Wisdom who saved us, we will fall down, and knowing the fullness of our salvation, we will worship.

The divine pedagogy, thus, is intricately interwoven with the other works of God’s saving οἰκονομία. Theologians have a place amidst the mighty works of God. Even now, as we await Christ’s second and full self-revelation in glory, we are participants in his teaching, as well as his justifying, sanctifying and redeeming. We live, in Calvin’s wonderful phrase, *in media luce*, “in the midst of light”,⁵⁸ in the midst of the new day that has dawned for the world in Jesus Christ. “For that at last is true happiness, that is the true and glorious kingdom, where Christ lives in human hearts through his gospel. For there is the satisfaction of souls, there the heavenly treasures, and there, finally, the kingdom of grace and salvation”.⁵⁹ When the words of the gospel find welcome in the human soul, a new life begins, one is delivered from death and one comes to share in light and life, in grace and salvation. The words of this teaching are neither empty nor false—least of all are they merely interesting. This is a teaching that swells the heart with the promise of fulfilled and superexcessive desire, that guides the will into the paths of peace and the narrow road that leads to salvation, that causes the mind to look upon the Saviour, crucified and risen, bloodied and glorious. The end of the divine pedagogy is,

⁵⁷ Vermigli, *In prior. ad Cor.*, fol. 28v.

⁵⁸ Calvin, CO49: 327. Calvin is speaking of the light of creation, not Christ. Cf. ch. 2, n. 33.

⁵⁹ Hemmingsen, *Comm.*, p.66.

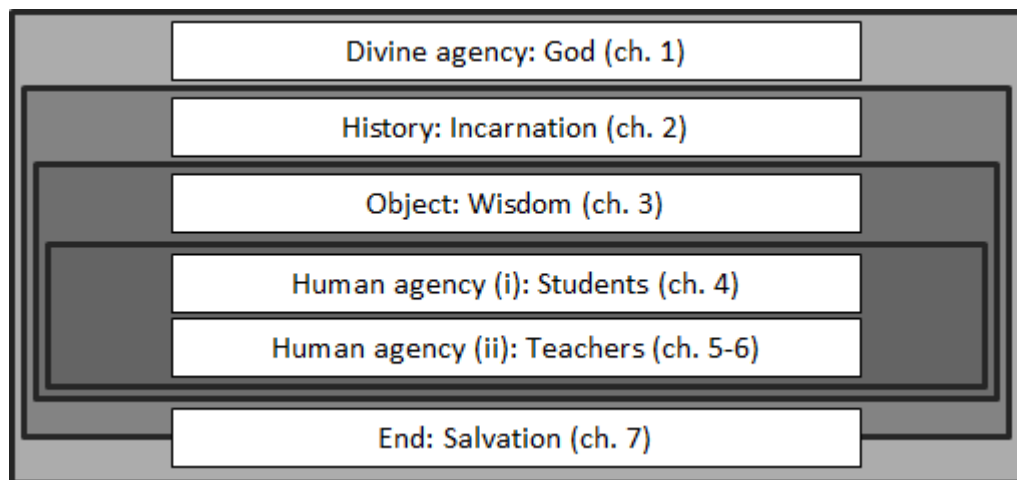
therefore, simultaneously the end of all God's saving works toward his creatures. The end of the divine pedagogy is, put simply, the end of everything we now see in this mirror dimly, and the beginning of life everlasting. The glory of "all the faithful" is "that in the plain light they may know the things which are now preached in a mystery, as it says in Jn. 17:3, 'This is eternal life, that they would know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent'".⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Aquinas, *In I ad Cor.* 2.1.87.

Conclusion | **Knowing God**

Στήθος κυρίου γνῶσις θεοῦ, ὁ δ' ἀναπεσὼν ἐπ' αὐτὸ θεολόγος ἔσται.
“The breast of the Lord is the knowledge of God; the one who rests against it shall be a theologian.”
— Evagrius of Pontus¹

God teaches us about himself through other people, particularly those called theologians and other teachers of theology (such as pastors, bishops and so on). The past chapters have gone into quite some detail about how this is so, treating in order the five elements of an ‘economic’ account of divine pedagogy identified at the beginning: (i) God, who teaches us as Christ and his Spirit; (ii) the history of his pedagogy in the incarnation; (iii) wisdom, the object around which this pedagogy circles; (iv) the kind of human agency appropriate to those learning this divine wisdom; and (v) the kind of human agency appropriate to those students who are made into teachers of this wisdom. I ended with a chapter on salvation, the goal of the divine pedagogy and the divine economy of grace more broadly, and so, the culmination of its (ii) history in our coming to know (i) God himself. To review:



This conclusion, first, presents again, much more concisely, some of the interpretive detail unearthed in the body of the exposition. In order of the five elements of the divine pedagogy identified at the beginning, it rehearses how premodern commentators understood 1 Corinthians 1-4 to speak to the reality of the ‘economic’ form of God’s teaching. I then review what could be added to the ‘economic’ or

¹ *Sententiae ad monachos* 120.

‘salvation-historical’ theologies of Webster and *Mysterium Salutis* by way of ‘expansiveness,’ with suggestions from the history of exegesis. Next, some directions in which the five elements schema could be expanded or deployed to analyze other accounts of divine and theological pedagogy are examined. In closing, I highlight a significant feature of ‘economic’ theology, namely, its breadth and inclusivity, with regard to theologians and their self-understanding.

The Economy of Divine Teaching

God teaches us about himself through other people. The “will of God” (1 Cor. 1:1) is primary in bringing about this teaching and learning, and so, we began with a consideration of God himself (chapter one), before considering how he has ordered his economy of teaching through the incarnation and the provision of teachers to the Church. God’s nature was considered especially in relation to the persons of Son and Spirit, following Paul’s language in 1 Cor. 1-4, with the Son being identified as eternal, substantial Wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 1:24) and the Spirit as divinely all-knowing (2:11-12). Who each person is as divine was reflected in their key role in the economy. The Son became wisdom for us (1:30), which commentators variously interpreted in terms of making us wise, illumination, grace, participation or the perfect revelation of the Father. In the late-medieval period and Reformation, attention turned to how Christ precisely as human could be wisdom for us. In turn, the Spirit reveals what he perfectly knows, being God by nature (2:10). This he does by sharing, teaching, enlightening or inspiring truth in those in whom he lives.

The central act of God’s economy is the incarnation (chapter two). God’s pedagogy with Israel mostly met with rejection and his pedagogy of the nations through creation failed to be successful. Seeing this, “it pleased God” to send his Son in human existence, foolish as that would appear to Jew and Greek, in order to teach all of humanity in a new, better way. Commentary on this theme, centred on 1 Corinthians 1:21, was remarkably similar from Chrysostom through the Reformation, barring the interpretation of the early Lutherans. Chrysostom’s exegesis had two main aspects: first, God intended that he be known ἀναλόγως, ‘by drawing connections,’ from the world he had created in wisdom; second, seeing this was unsuccessful, God proceeded ἐτέρως, ‘another way.’ Different presentations of the world’s connection to God were made: it

was inlaid with divine or natural wisdom, or acted as a mirror or theatre of the divine wisdom. In noting his decision to teach ‘another way,’ commentators were especially keen to highlight God’s pedagogical intentions, adapting his teaching to the disappointing level of his students and their needs. Musculus offered an elucidation or correction of the tradition by stating that this new pedagogical direction was “predestined before the ages for our glory” (2:7), not an innovation on God’s part.

The content God intended to teach his people through the history of Israel, incarnation and the Church is divine wisdom (chapter three). This divine wisdom is contained in the Old and New Testaments, as they witness to Christ, the eternal Wisdom of God become wisdom for us. This divine wisdom is characterized as eternal, infinite, mysterious and transcendent. By contrast, human wisdom, identified as philosophy, rhetoric or the liberal arts as a whole, or later as human reason or any product of human thought, action or culture, is characterized as apparent (not real), natural and mortal. Seeing, then, the superiority of divine wisdom over against humanly-contrived wisdom, we turned to examine its content. Here a disagreement was noted in the tradition between ‘Protestant’ and ‘Catholic’ interpretations. The former sees all divine wisdom as centred and contained in Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). This same crucified Christ is grasped as milk by infant Christians and as meat by more mature Christians (3:1-2). For the latter, ‘Catholic’ reading, there is a twofold wisdom in Christ: a simpler wisdom, containing the truths necessary for salvation, in Christ’s humanity and a more difficult wisdom, accessible only to the “perfect” (2:6), comprising Christ’s divinity. On this account, teachers must adjust the material taught, and not only the manner of teaching, to the level of their students.

However the divine wisdom present in the person of Christ is understood, all agreed that students of this wisdom stood in need of the Spirit (chapter four). In Ambrosiaster’s phrase, “The things of God cannot be learned without the Spirit of God.” The natural (ψυχικὸς) person (1 Cor. 2:14), who lacks the indwelling Spirit, suffers a cognitive blockage with regard to divine things: “he is not able to understand them.” This is because he lives like the animals or follows the inborn powers of his own soul, labouring, in addition, under the vices of pride, presumption, envy and ignorance. Such a person first becomes “spiritual” (2:15) when they are brought to faith by miracles and/or preaching (2:4-5). In this way the basis of our spiritual life is laid, whether this

“foundation” is considered as Christ, faith in him or basic teachings about him (3:10). The person born anew with faith in Christ comes to possess a new spiritual life: the Spirit dwells within him or her and grants new cognitive powers (2:13-15), as well as a moral and affective transformation. Chiefly, the spiritual person, the student of divine things, is made capable of a correct judgment or discernment regarding divine wisdom; he or she even, in Paul’s phrase, comes to possess the “mind of Christ” (2:16), commonly taken to mean the possession of truth about Christ and the ability to judge of his reality truly. This judgment, for a handful of commentators, extended to a student’s right and responsibility to judge whether a teacher of theology is helpful or harmful to their salvation, the ultimate goal of the divine pedagogy for each student.

Some students within the economy are chosen and called by God to become teachers of their others. This assigns them a definite position within God’s pedagogy and a corresponding authority (chapter five). In terms of position, teachers are, first, alongside one another. Aquinas and Calvin divided the offices in the Church quite differently, yet both emphasized the collegiality of ministers among themselves. Both, further, saw teaching as a special gift somewhat elevated above the administration of baptism (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17a). Nevertheless, teachers are, second, below God in position; they are decidedly “not the Lord”, as the Gloss puts it. Theologians, and other teachers of theology, are constituted by and stand under God’s authorship and authority (4:1); functionally, this means under the authority and lordship of Christ and his Spirit. Premodern commentators emphasized this reality against the promotion of certain teachers over against others (1:12-13), as, for example, in quarrels between Thomists and Scotists or Lutherans and Zwinglians. Positively speaking, students were counselled to ‘use’ all the teachers made available to them (3:21-23) and teachers were counselled to a rich and sincere unity in their thinking and labours (1:10). Teachers are united in their labours because God works in them all in the same way: they teach and minister exteriorly, while God by his Spirit teaches interiorly. This interior, divine teaching makes the exterior, human teaching—empty in itself—efficacious and life-giving (3:6-7). Because they mediate divine teaching in this way, theologians bear a delegated authority; thus, third, they stand in a certain sense ‘above’ their students. This delegation of authority, however, signals that they remain dependent on God’s gifting and empowering and subject to his final judgment.

After treating their position and authority, arising from the calling and gifting of God, I spoke of the method and judgment of teachers, arising from his empowering and evaluation (chapter six). Those who teach divine knowledge are not, first of all, to teach as if their material were their own, human wisdom, a “wisdom of words” (1 Cor. 1:17b). Beyond the knowledge and ability that are the gifts requisite of any teacher, theologians require a special divine empowerment: they speak in “words ... taught by the Spirit” (2:13), or *in doctrina Spiritus*, as the Vulgate has it. This ‘teaching activity of the Spirit’ is an empowerment of both teacher and student, the former to speak and the latter to understand. The Spirit’s empowerment of teachers to speak was interpreted various ways, including in terms of infusion, dictation, impulsion, suggestion or, simply, instruction. Further, this Spirit-inspired teaching was recognized to have certain qualities. The Reformers emphasized its simplicity, with Calvin noting that such simplicity was a mode of translucence: it allowed the true, divine source to shine through. In Paul’s metaphor of the various materials built on the foundation (“gold, silver and precious stones; wood, hay and straw,” 3:12), commentators saw a scale by which to evaluate the quality of one’s teaching. Each metaphorical material was correlated to qualities of good or deficient teaching; bad teaching was viewed in light of Paul’s warning to those who “destroy” the temple of God by undoing their students’ foundation (3:17). The “fire”, the apostle states, will reveal the true quality of the structure; in this, commentators saw a reference to testing by final judgment, purgatory, earthly tribulation, the light of Scripture or the Spirit himself. This testing is especially meant to probe a teacher’s faithfulness (4:2) and it is reserved to God alone (4:4-5). For, once again, the lord and author of this pedagogy is God himself.

This means that the goal of this pedagogy is determined by God its author. His intention in teaching humanity through certain specially called and gifted people is to bring his people to salvation or, to say the same thing, to knowing him (chapter seven). The reason God commands his teachers not to teach in a “wisdom of words” is because that would “empty the cross of Christ”, in which is human salvation (1 Cor. 1:17b-c). This is the goal of the devil who operates a kind of counter-pedagogy with his own false teachers and temptations to sin, inciting envy and other vices of the natural person. The student who resists these is able to come gradually to maturity, as a “perfect” person (2:6). This perfection or maturity was seen to consist in perfect judgment or discernment,

perfect understanding and will or, more simply, in perfect faith; whatever the case, these are qualities of the “spiritual person” (2:15) taken to their fullest expression. Those who progress or persevere in this way are heirs of a reward: the “glory” prepared by God (2:7), which “the eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, nor has gone up into the human heart” (2:9), because it is ultimately God himself. This is the goal of the divine pedagogy: that God would have a people who know him, and in knowing him, love him.

A Further Reformation of the Doctrine of Divine Pedagogy

John Webster, as we saw in the introduction, argued that we needed “an expansive account of the economy by which [the theological mind] is formed and within which it fulfils its calling”.² The theologian takes part in the whole history of redemption which God freely effects to save his people from sin and death. His or her place in this drama is determinative of the shape of theological practice under God’s own illuminative teaching. Yet more can be said. This thesis, to recall briefly, has sought to add to the expansiveness of Webster’s own helpful recovery of the doctrine of divine pedagogy by treating how it is that God teaches us about himself through theologians. In other words, certain human beings play a role in the economy (that is, teaching) through which other human beings are enabled to receive divine instruction (that is, learning).

In this regard, an expansion of Webster’s account has involved an important differentiation in the social economy of God’s teaching. Not all are individual students learning from the enlightening of the Spirit, so to speak, on the same level; rather, while all do in fact learn from God, only some are chosen and gifted so as to teach others the knowledge of God. In his teaching, God in an act of his lordship makes use of human teachers as mediate causes by which to effect his people’s coming to know him. This involves, further, a differentiation in human agencies brought within the scope of the economy. The sanctification, the ‘being made’ by the Spirit, of the teacher of theology is particularized or specified by her task of teaching outwardly, while the Spirit enlightens her hearers inwardly; it thus requires a self-effacing simplicity, a form of translucence to the divine light. In turn, the sanctification of the student of theology is specified in

² John Webster, “Curiosity,” in *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), pp.193-202 at p.199.

relation to his teachers and fellow students as an avoidance of presumption, pride and envy, among other vices, and an embrace of humility and teachableness.

Conversely, the element that is so crucially recovered in Webster's account seemed somewhat attenuated in the Catholic account of the Church's teaching about God's revelation in *Mysterium Salutis*. The Church, in all of its members, but in a special way in its teaching office and theologians, passes on the revelation of God to further generations. In its decisions about what constitutes true teaching about God, the Church in the person of the Pope (speaking *ex cathedra*), the Pope together with the bishops, or the ecumenical council is preserved from error by the promised assistance and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The teaching office, as the premoderns recognized, operates in a mediatorial space between the whole people of God and God himself. Yet, once again, more can be said. Those same premodern commentators saw in its opening chapters an especially active Spirit at work, revealing to teachers of theology the deep things of God, inspiring them with a form and/or content of teaching (*doctrina Spiritus*) and dwelling within them to shape them for God's use. This much fuller understanding of the Spirit's leading of the postapostolic Church into all truth, while equally observant of the Spirit's divinity and lordship, is more attentive to the positive ways—beyond the mere *assistentia negativa*³—in which God continues to work within a diverse body, sovereignly bestowing gifts when and to whom he wills.

Expanding the Structure of the Economy of Divine Teaching

There was 'space,' as I stated in the introduction, remaining within Webster's doctrine for an expansion of his account. In addition to the four elements already present (divine agency, history, object and human agency of one kind) there was, following Paul in 1 Corinthians 1-4 and the premodern commentators who opened up its truths, need of a fifth. This analytic schematic of Paul's teaching on the economy of God's revelation of his

³ The idea of the *assistentia negativa* is, however, tied to an acknowledged restriction of revelation to the work of Christ. See Johannes Feiner, "Offenbarung und Kirche—Kirche und Offenbarung," in *Mysterium Salutis*, 1: 527. The Spirit, strictly speaking, does not reveal. Whether this is an adequate account of the Spirit's agency in relation to the divine work of revelation, in light of 1 Cor. 2:10 and its premodern readers, is too large a problem to be broached here. For a short overview of revelation's transmutations in modern theology, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp.214-29, and further, Peter Eicher, *Offenbarung: Prinzip neuzeitlicher Theologie* (Münich: Kösel, 1977).

mysteries, breaking it down into five parts or elements, offers us a simple way of diagnosing to what degree a doctrine is sufficiently 'economic' in scope. One may notice, for instance, that an ahistorical conception of divine teaching is presented, lacking (ii); or that the object of our knowledge of God is rather underdefined, lacking a robust (iii); or, most seriously, that the divine agent on whom the whole economy depends is curiously absent or inactive, lacking (i). This analytic presentation offers still further space for the additional expansion—and, it may well be, correction—of my own reformulation of the doctrine, dependent on the premodern commentators surveyed in this study.

In terms of expansion, I think especially of the multiplicity of creatures which are employed by God in his teaching. In the introduction, I wrote of 'many histories', 'various objects' and 'multiple agents.' While thinking upon the economy described by 1 Corinthians 1-4, we were concerned primarily with a single history (the incarnation), a single object (divine wisdom) and three agents or sets of agents (God, human students and human teachers). The economy is broader than this, however. This history of salvation interconnects with many other histories; the object of divine wisdom is witnessed to in Scripture, and meditation on this object gives rise to many other objects; human teachers and students, finally, have other roles and identities which impact upon their agency in the teaching and learning of theology. This multiplicity is an important formal characteristic of the economy, capable of more exploration than was possible in working upon 1 Cor. 1-4; I offer just the beginning to such an exploration in the following paragraphs.

In the history central to the divine pedagogy there is a complex of objects which in a complicated way form the single 'object' of theological study, the Word or Wisdom of God: these are the canon of Scripture, the Spirit-inspired words of the prophets and apostles; divine Wisdom incarnate in Jesus Christ; and the eternal Wisdom, with whom the man Jesus is identical, but not co-extensive. Study of this central object has led to a vast production of other, secondary objects: commentaries, treatises, letters, florilegia, glosses, *summae*, etc. These all, of course, have their own histories and are located within particular histories, in their own languages, genres and personal and institutional relationships. (What is the significance, for instance, of the fact that the academy study of the Bible was once primarily undertaken in religious institutions and is now primarily

undertaken in secular ones?⁴) Yet these all, so I have argued, are contained within and have their meaning within the teaching activity of the Spirit, who is related in many ways, negative as well as positive, to them all.

It is not insignificant, further, that three of the five elements identified are actors. Human students and teachers were intentionally separated out into (iv) and (v) in order to highlight the social economy present in 1 Corinthians 1-4 and absent from so many modern doctrines of the divine pedagogy. One can thus note the lack of human teachers in an account under examination with more clarity. But it was also crucial to separate (i) divine agency and place it at the head of our account, since God's working is not on the same plane as human agency. God is not one of the 'multiple agents' acting in the economy—or rather, he is, but as he by whose will there are other agencies at all. God gives us to be and to will and works in us and through us in ways possible for no creature. As Hugh of St. Cher writes, "Christ enters into the sheepfold by himself, that is, into human hearts".⁵

There are many actors in the history of theology, which has its Paul, its Aquinas and its Calvin, alongside thousands of better or lesser known figures. Each of these human beings has acted—praying, meditating, worshipping, sinning, learning, teaching—in relation to God and his pedagogy, in knowledge and in ignorance, throughout the course of their lives. The Spirit knew and resided within each one who was called by God to be a teacher of theology, as well as each one of their genuine students. He, in Cajetan's phrase, "put their souls to spiritual uses, like one who dwells in a home puts it to its own uses".⁶ This *uti*, 'putting to use,' of the Spirit does not, however, abolish human agency. The Spirit, in lordly command of his pedagogy, makes use of the teaching activity of certain human persons, in all the measure he grants them to have as a free creaturely actor within their own language, training and history. Thus, teachers of theology act in their teaching as mediate causes within and under the divine agency of our one Teacher. These moments of dual agency, divine and human, owe all their efficacy to the divine partner (1 Cor. 3:6); on the other hand, they owe their bodily, cultural and intellectual shape to the human partner, who does not cease to be a creature when put to use by

⁴ Cf. the "scenes" with which Michael C. Legaspi opens *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: OUP, 2010), pp. vii-viii.

⁵ Hugh of St. Cher, *In ep. omn. D. Pauli*, exp. gloss., fol. 73v; cf. ch. 4, n. 77.

⁶ Cajetan, *Ep. Pauli*, fol. 45v; cf. ch. 1, n. 64.

God. Yet even this latter, the very creatureliness of the theologian, is itself a gift of God. As Nicholas of Amiens so penetratingly perceives, God is as much the author of the external, creaturely teaching (because the Creator of all that is) as the author of the internal, divine teaching (here 'by himself').⁷ Thus, the divine agency at work in this economy is not one of the 'multiple agents' alongside one another, so to speak, on the same metaphysical plane; rather, without God's action there would be neither economy nor creation, let alone the knowledge of his saving wisdom.

The Divine Economy and Theological Self-Understanding

John Webster re-introduced this fundamental principle of God's agency in theological practice, significantly, in a reflection on Christian theological self-understanding. What it is theologians do when they practice theology is adequately accounted for only by "talk of God and God's actions".⁸ Such an insight implies, with a necessary circularity, the need for a theological account of theology (Webster terms it 'theological theology'). This is because the reality of God is a prior, determining reality with regard to human creatures: God, and the order of his works called by Scripture his οἰκονομία, determines how it is that human beings come to know him, and further, how it is that some of these become teachers of this knowledge to others. If, then, what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1-4 is true about his place in the divine economy, and the place of others who are "stewards (οἰκονόμους) of the mysteries of God" (4:1), it is also true of those who, by exegeting this passage, act as teachers of theology. Thus, the premodern commentators who reflected on this passage of Scripture saw themselves in its light; their theological self-understanding, in other words, was enclosed within Paul's theology of the divine economy of wisdom.

In this connection, it is worth noting the theological self-understanding of Catharinus when, in the course of exegeting 1 Corinthians 1-4, he acts in light of the gravity of God's teaching disclosed there. The Dominican knows himself to stand in the position Paul is describing of the "other" (3:10), who builds on the foundation of Jesus Christ laid by the apostles. Thus, Catharinus takes the greatest care not to harm the spiritual lives of his readers through arrogance or ignorance, but humbly offers up his

⁷ Cf. ch. 5, n. 159.

⁸ John Webster, *Theological Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p.18.

exegesis to the testing fire. “This seems to me the plain sense”, he writes, concluding his interpretation. However:

There is left to the prudent reader an unrestricted judgment, to embrace what seems to attain more closely to the mind of the Apostle.... If this our exposition is less than pleasing to the reader, I do not contend for it. Let us also hold to the ‘foundation’ and do nothing contentiously, but striving in sincerity, always place our understanding (through God’s grace) under obedience to the Spirit, who declares what is uncertain in the Church. Because if we see—even if we err in certain matters (as is the human condition), we will hope to finally pass through saved, or through fire.⁹

This highlights, again, the ‘circularity’ of studying the economy of God’s teaching: Catharinus is expositing the same judgment under which he lives. A theological theology is a virtuous embrace of these circularities; it is a theological practice that both believes the teaching about God it presents and believes in the God about whom it teaches, and resultingly, operates in light of his reality and economy. It lives in confidence that the Spirit still yet ‘declares what is uncertain in the Church.’

Conclusion

This thesis has many layers: biblical, historical, systematic and so forth. It offers much room for expansion and further exploration within and without its pages. It also, I believe, offers many challenges. Its simple, repeated thesis was meant to hold together things that, in the eyes of premodern commentators on 1 Corinthians, should not be put asunder. God teaches us about himself, yes—but he ordinarily does so through other people. An understanding of divine pedagogy in which God only speaks to us in a direct, unmediated way in an insufficient reading of the New Testament. But so too is an understanding of theology which takes it to be an exclusively human endeavour: one person teaching another about a god who is more or less uninvolved. Here one must say with emphasis, *God* teaches us about himself through other people. One cannot read Paul’s letters or, in a different way, the book of Acts without acknowledging that those charged with sharing God’s wisdom (or the gospel or the knowledge of God) knew themselves to be able to do what they did only in virtue of a divine working. May those of us who labour in the field of theology today undertake our task in the same conviction.

⁹ Catharinus, *Comm.*, p.156.

Appendix A. Chronological Table of Commentators

* Not surveyed in thesis. ** Authorship in doubt. + Not extant.

| Commentator | Lifespan | Language | Genre | First Publication |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---|-------------------|
| Origen | d. c.254 | Greek | Commentary fragments | - |
| Ephrem the Syrian | c.306-373 | +Syriac (Armenian) | Commentary | - |
| Marius Victorinus | d. c.363 | +Latin | Commentary | - |
| Ambrosiaster | fl. 366-384 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| John Chrysostom | c.347-407 | Greek | Homilies | - |
| *Theodore of Mopsuestia | c.350-428 | Greek | Catena extracts | - |
| Augustine | 354-430 | Latin | Extracts | - |
| *Severian of Gabala | fl. c.400 | Greek | Catena extracts | - |
| Cyril of Alexandria | c.376-444 | Greek | Commentary | - |
| Cassiodorus | c.485-585 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| Gregory the Great | c.540-604 | Latin | Extracts | - |
| John of Damascus | c.675/76-749 | Greek | Commentary | - |
| Raban Maur | c.780-856 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| *Claudius of Turin | fl. 810-827 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| Florus of Lyons | c.810-860 | Latin | Florilegium (from Augustine) | - |
| Sedulius Scottus | fl. 848-58 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| Pseudo-Jerome | late 9 th c. (?) | Latin | Commentary | - |
| Haymo of Auxerre | d. 875 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| *Photius of Constantinople | c.810-893 | Greek | Catena extracts | - |
| Atto of Vercelli | c.885-961 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| *Oecumenius of Trikka | fl. c. 990 (?) | Greek | Catena extracts | - |
| Lanfranc of Bec | c.1005-1089 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| **Bruno the Carthusian | d. 1101 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| Theophylact of Ohrid | 1055-1107 | Greek | Commentary | - |
| <i>Glossa ordinaria</i> (**Anselm of Laon [Paul]) | c.1100-1140 | Latin | Bible with interlinear and marginal glosses | - |
| *Gilbert de la Porrée | c.1070-1154 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| Hervé de Bourg-Dieu | c.1080- c.1150 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| *Ralph of Flaix | fl. 1157 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| Peter Lombard | c.1096-1164 | Latin | Commentary on text and <i>Glossa</i> | - |
| Robert of Melun | c.1100-1167 | Latin | Questions | - |
| Nicholas of Amiens | 1147-c.1200 | Latin | Commentary on text and Gilbert de la Porrée | - |
| *Stephen Langton | c.1150-1228 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| Robert Grosseteste | c.1175-1253 | Latin | Commentary fragments | - |
| *Alexander of Hales | 1185-1245 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| *Jean de la Rochelle | c.1200-1245 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| *Geoffrey of Bleneau | d. 1250 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| Hugh of St. Cher | c.1200-1263 | Latin | Commentary on text and <i>Glossa</i> | - |
| Thomas Aquinas | c.1225-1274 | Latin | Commentary on text and <i>Glossa</i> | - |
| *Peter of Tarantaise | c.1225-1276 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| Nicholas of Gorran | 1232-1295 | Latin | Commentary | - |

| Commentator | Lifespan | Language | Genre | First Publication |
|------------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Peter John Olivi | 1248-1298 | Latin | Commentary | - |
| *Meister Eckhart | c.1260-1328 | +Latin | Commentary | - |
| Nicholas of Lyra | c.1270-1349 | Latin | Commentary on text and <i>Glossa</i> | - |
| Denis the Carthusian | 1402-1471 | Latin | Commentary | 1532 (?) |
| John Colet | 1467-1519 | Latin | Paraphrase | c. 1496/97 |
| Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples | c.1455-1536 | Latin | Commentary | 1512 |
| Desiderius Erasmus | c.1466-1536 | Latin | Paraphrase | 1519 (1 st ed.) |
| Philipp Melanchthon | 1497-1560 | Latin | Annotations; commentary | 1522 (1 st ed.); 1561 |
| Johann Bugenhagen | 1485-1558 | Latin | Commentary | 1530 |
| Cardinal Cajetan | 1469-1534 | Latin | Commentary | 1531 |
| Konrad Pellikan | 1478-1556 | Latin | Commentary | 1534 |
| Heinrich Bullinger | 1504-1575 | Latin | Commentary | 1537 |
| Ulrich Zwingli | 1484-1531 | Latin | Commentary | 1539 |
| Jean de Gagny | d. 1549 | Latin | Commentary | 1539 |
| Claude Guillaud | 1493-1551 | Latin | Commentary | 1543 |
| Sebastian Meyer | 1465-1545 | Latin | Commentary | 1546 |
| John Calvin | 1509-1564 | Latin; French | Commentary | 1546 (1 st ed.), 1551, 1556; 1547 |
| Ambrosius Catharinus Politus | 1483-1553 | Latin | Commentary | 1551 |
| Peter Martyr Vermigli | 1499-1562 | Latin | Commentary | 1551 (1 st ed.), 1567 |
| Wolfgang Musculus | 1497-1563 | Latin | Commentary | 1559 |
| Georg Maior | 1502-1574 | Latin | Commentary | 1561 |
| Gregorio Primateo | 1490-1578 | Latin | Commentary | 1564 |
| Neils Hemmingsen | 1513-1600 | Latin | Commentary | 1564 |
| *Isidoro Chiari | 1495-1555 | Latin | Commentary | 1698 (?) |

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